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Item 5 of the provisional agenda**
Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

Central Emergency Response Fund

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/134, covers activities from the launch of the Central Emergency Response Fund on 9 March 2006 until the end of 2006.

Findings show that the Fund has made progress towards its objectives of providing rapid, coordinated, predictable and equitable funding for humanitarian emergencies, based on demonstrable needs. The Fund is promoting early action and response to reduce loss of life, enhancing response to time-critical requirements based on demonstrable needs and strengthening core elements of humanitarian response in underfunded crises.

The future success and sustainability of the Fund depend on increasing funding levels to $500 million by the end of 2008. A high-level donor conference on the Fund towards the end of 2007 will be an opportunity to make new pledges and increase broad-based political support for the Fund.

* A/62/50.
** E/2007/100.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/134, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it during its sixty-second session, through the Economic and Social Council, on the detailed use of the Central Emergency Response Fund. The report covers activities related to the Fund from its launch on 9 March 2006 until the end of 2006.[1] Activities of the Fund in 2007 will be mentioned only in terms of noteworthy recent developments.

II. Year in review

2. The Central Emergency Response Fund was established by the General Assembly to ensure a more predictable and timely response to humanitarian emergencies, with the objectives of promoting early action and response to reduce loss of life, enhancing response to time-critical requirements and strengthening core elements of humanitarian response in underfunded crises, based on demonstrable needs and on priorities identified in consultation with the affected State as appropriate.[2]

A. Loan component

3. The Fund's loan mechanism, created in 1992 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182, is a revolving $50 million fund that is used as a cash-flow mechanism by eligible humanitarian organizations. The loan mechanism allows rapid access to funds ahead of the transfer of donor pledges. The mechanism has, over the last 15 years, disbursed approximately $393 million in loans. Despite the introduction of the grant element of the Fund, there has been no decrease in use of the loan element, as it continues to serve as a valuable tool for United Nations agencies, funds and programmes[3] and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to bridge critical funding gaps usually caused by delays in the receipt of funding. (See annex I for loans advanced from 1992 to April 2007.)

4. In 2006, $53.3 million was advanced, mostly to organizations operating in the Sudan. A loan of $1,650,000 was advanced to Afghanistan. (See annex II for details of loans advanced in 2006 and up to April 2007.)

5. The remainder of the present report will detail the use of the grant component of the Central Emergency Response Fund.

B. Grant component

6. In 2006, 51 States, one local government and one private organization contributed $298.7 million to the Fund. In the first four months of 2007, 57 States, 1 local government and 2 private organizations — as well as individuals, who

[1] All financial information reflects funds approved by the Emergency Relief Coordinator as at 31 December 2006.

[2] See resolution 60/124.

[3] Hereinafter referred to as the United Nations.

contributed $117,959 through the United Nations Foundation[4] — pledged more than $345 million, with paid contributions totalling $267.9 million. In total, 71 countries have contributed so far. (See annex III for a complete list of pledges and contributions in 2006 and 2007.)

7. While most funds have been contributed by a small number of established humanitarian donors, an increasing number of new and emerging donors have become contributors to the Fund. It is crucial to broaden and deepen support for the Fund and widen its donor base to ensure future sustainability.

8. From the launch of the Central Emergency Response Fund on 9 March 2006 to the end of that year, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator committed $259.3 million to 331 life-saving humanitarian projects in 35 countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. In the first four months of 2007, $157 million was committed to 159 urgent humanitarian projects in 30 countries. The Emergency Relief Coordinator maintains a minimum reserve of $30 million (the maximum allocation for a single emergency under the rapid-response grant element).

Rapid-response grant allocations

9. In accordance with the objective of utilizing the Fund to address core emergency humanitarian needs in sudden-onset disasters or rapid deterioration in existing crises, a total of $182.4 million went to jump-start humanitarian response to such disasters and crises in 24 countries. Most funding (59 per cent) went to rapid response to crises in Africa. The funding committed through the rapid-response component amounted to 70 per cent of total commitments from the Fund, which is broadly in keeping with its mandate to provide two thirds of the grant component for rapid-response activities.[5]

10. Prior to the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund, the majority of flash appeals did not produce adequate funds to cover the initial phase of emergency operations. Information obtained from the Financial Tracking Service[6] on flash appeals from 2002 to 2006 demonstrates that before the introduction of the Fund, the median funding response within the first month after the launch of an appeal was only 16 per cent of identified needs. Following the launch of the upgraded Central Emergency Response Fund, median flash appeal coverage increased from 16 to 37 per cent of the total funds requested at the one-month mark.

11. The rapid-response grant component supported humanitarian operations in response to natural disasters and to new or deteriorating complex emergencies. Examples of recipients of Central Emergency Response Fund grants for natural disaster response include Afghanistan and Indonesia. Funding granted to Afghanistan provided critical humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations in areas affected by the protracted drought in 2006. In Indonesia, funds enabled the humanitarian community to commence immediately time-critical activities in

[4] The United Nations Foundation is a public United States charity that works to promote public and private partnerships to address the world's most pressing problems. It is possible to make online and tax-deductible donations to the Central Emergency Response Fund through the Foundation (www.unfoundation.org).

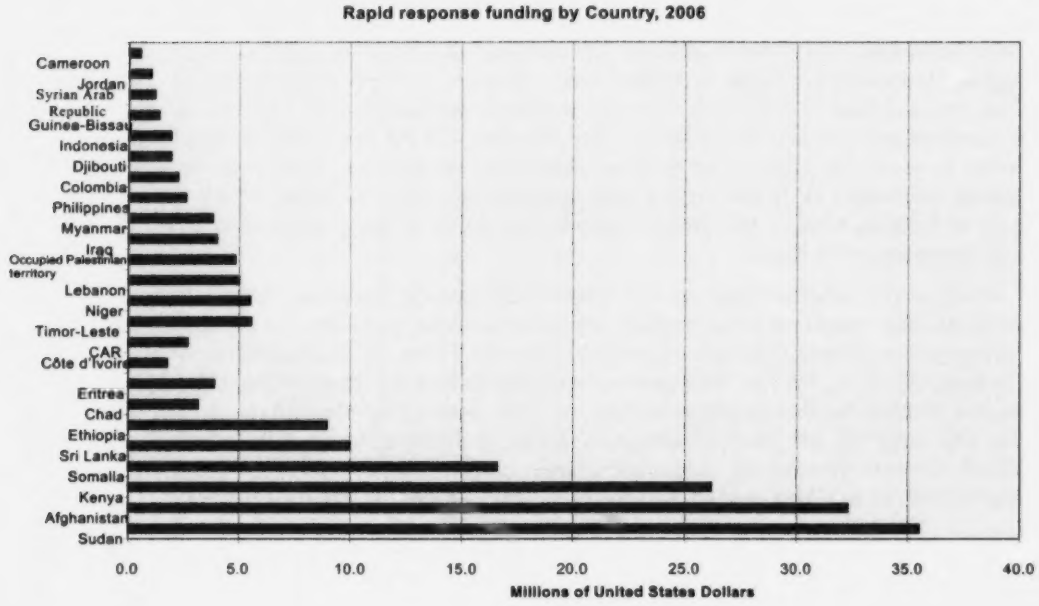
[5] See ST/SGB/2006/10.

[6] The Financial Tracking Service receives data from donor Governments and recipient agencies, and also gathers information on specific pledges in the media or on donor websites.

response to severe floods. The United Nations, IOM and implementing partners were able to procure and distribute essential food and non-food items and provide emergency life-saving health services to an estimated 300,000 affected people.

12. Approximately half of the remaining funding from the rapid-response grant component went to complex emergencies. For example, in response to the renewed violence in Sri Lanka in 2006, which caused significant new displacements, grants made it possible to kick-start critical activities and support affected populations. Essential food, health, water and sanitation services were provided.

13. Rapid-response requests submitted in the early days of the upgraded Fund were characterized by a lack of awareness of and guidance on the grant request process. Improved guidance and increased familiarity with the Fund led to significant improvements in the formulation and submission of requests. However, there are still varying degrees of capacity and knowledge of how to submit appropriate requests for funds; this should be addressed in order to ensure that the standard guidelines for submissions are met and thereby ensure consistency in the timely disbursement of funds.



Underfunded grant allocations

14. Ensuring greater equity of humanitarian response is one of the key objectives of the Fund. The underfunded grant component works in support of that objective by providing funding to countries where the Emergency Relief Coordinator has determined that there are critical, poorly funded humanitarian needs. Countries are selected on the basis of funding data captured by the Financial Trading System and recommendations from Fund-eligible entities. The decision-making process is complemented by consultation through the inter-agency meetings on the Fund (see para. 43) and discussions with humanitarian and resident coordinators.

15. In 2006, the Emergency Relief Coordinator allocated $76.9 million from the underfunded grant component in two rounds to 137 projects in 17 countries. Almost 99 per cent of funds committed went to underfunded emergencies in Africa. Allocations ranged from $38 million (Democratic Republic of the Congo) to $1 million (Zambia, Ethiopia, Kenya and Haiti). The Democratic Republic of the Congo was the largest recipient of funding because it continues to have one of the most neglected humanitarian emergencies in the world. More than 1,200 people die every day in that country from conflict-related causes such as malnutrition, preventable diseases and gender-based violence. In addition, more than 1.1 million remain displaced as a result of continuing insecurity. Funding has been used to help mitigate the consequences of that long-standing crisis and to improve access to those most affected, despite the many logistical challenges.

16. Early indications suggest that the underfunded grant component has also contributed to improving sectoral funding levels by strengthening core elements of humanitarian operations. For example, health and multisector[7] activities, which consistently experience funding shortfalls, received more than half of Central Emergency Response Fund funding allocations from the underfunded grant element in 2006. According to a report received from the humanitarian coordinator in Liberia, the impact of such funding in filling critical gaps in the health sector was evident, as the funding level of health projects identified through the consolidated appeal process rose by 40 per cent.[8]

17. Revisions have been made to the method of country selection for the underfunded grant component to ensure a more integrated approach. Criteria and procedures, including an improved time frame for the disbursement of funds, were finalized and improved guidance materials were made available by the end of 2006. Further refinements to the method of selecting countries for underfunded grants would benefit from improved needs-assessment frameworks.

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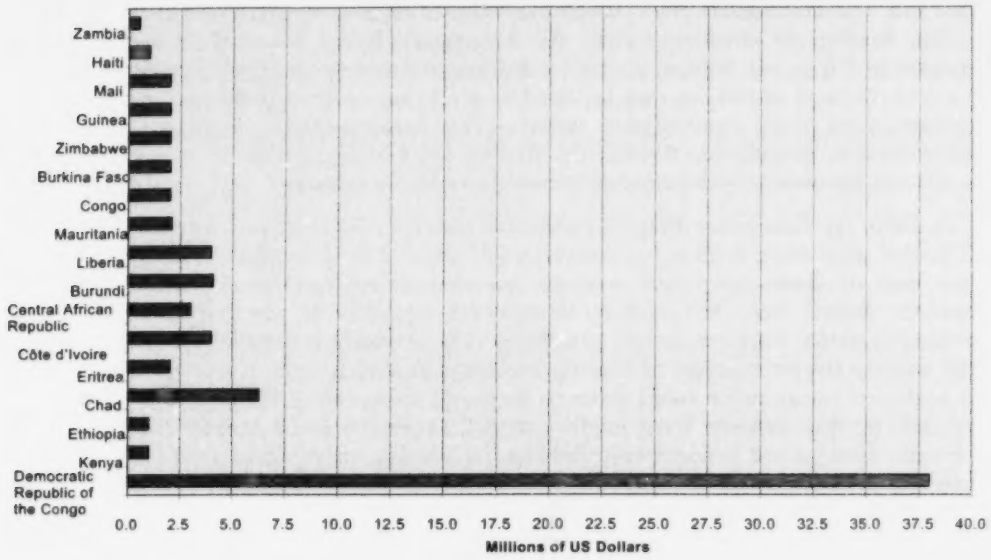
[7] Support programmes for refugees and internally displaced persons for which funds are allocated to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees comprise the majority of multisector programmes; interventions were made, in the areas of shelter, protection, health and water and sanitation facilities, among others.

[8] Prior to the allocation from the Central Emergency Response Fund, only 2 per cent of health projects identified in the consolidated appeal process had been funded by mid-2006. With funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund, coverage of and access to health facilities was improved through a number of projects, and by the end of 2006, 13 per cent of health projects identified through the consolidated appeal had been funded. Of the total amount received for consolidated appeal projects in the health sector, the Fund contributed 40 per cent.

Underfunded commitments by country, 2006



Grant allocations by country

18. The top four recipients of grants from the Fund in 2006 were the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan, Afghanistan and Kenya, each of which received more than $25 million. Together, because of the scale and complexity of their humanitarian emergencies, those four countries constitute almost half of the total allocations in 2006.

19. The Democratic Republic of the Congo received a total of $38 million in grants from the underfunded element for malaria control and cholera response in conflict-affected areas, mine action activities and protection and food assistance for returning refugees and internally displaced persons. Funds have also been granted for health services, including immunization programmes, as well as activities aimed at reducing sexual and gender-based violence.

20. The Sudan received rapid-response grants of $35.5 million to enable the humanitarian community to provide life-saving assistance to those affected by the deteriorating humanitarian situation. In Darfur, the Central Emergency Response Fund provided funding for humanitarian activities in all critical and life-saving sectors. For example, cereal rations in Darfur were restored in June 2006 as a result of contributions from the Fund. Without the grant, the procurement of essential food items such as pulses would not have been possible.

21. Afghanistan received $32.3 million in rapid-response grants to ensure the continuation of emergency response activities in the sectors of health, water and sanitation, and food assistance for drought-affected people in more than 22 provinces. The funds enabled the food needs of 1.9 million drought-affected people

to be covered and improved the quality of health services in security-compromised areas.

22. Kenya received $27.2 million from both grant components. Most of the funds were disbursed under the rapid-response grant component to ensure the delivery of food and the provision of water and sanitation facilities to drought- and flood-affected communities and to Somali refugees. In particular, funds provided by the Central Emergency Response Fund made it possible to respond quickly to the prevailing drought in order to save the lives of vulnerable women and children. (See annex IV for a detailed breakdown of allocations by country.)

Grant allocations by sector

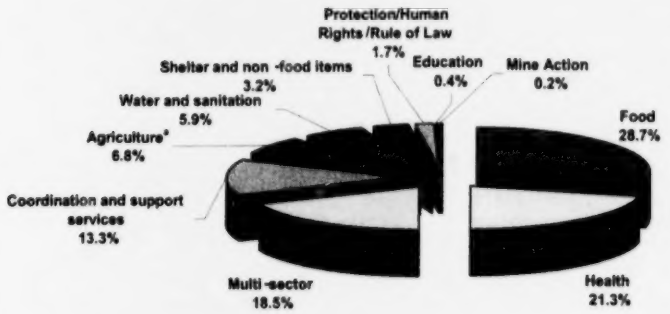
23. A breakdown of total Central Emergency Response Fund commitments by sector indicates that the top three sectors funded in 2006 were food (28.7 per cent), health (21.3 per cent) and multisector activities (18.5 per cent). This demonstrates that, in addition to contributing to poorly funded sectors such as health and multisector activities (see para. 16), the Fund has also provided time-critical support to resource-demanding sectors such as food. Although the Fund has provided a significant amount of funds ($74.3 million) to that sector — mainly to avert food pipeline breaks in 22 countries — the amount contributed is less than 5 per cent of the overall requirement.[9]

24. Funds have also been used to bridge critical gaps in humanitarian response at the sector level. For example, the Fund has contributed to raising the coverage of consolidated and flash appeals in 2006 in specific sectors: water and sanitation activities by 6 per cent ($14.6 million committed in 2006), health activities by 7 per cent ($56 million committed in 2006) and coordination and support services[10] by 11 per cent ($33.1 million committed in 2006). (See annex V for a detailed breakdown of allocations by sector.)

[9] Food was the top-funded sector in 2006 consolidated and flash appeals ($1.86 billion, or 90 per cent of total requirements).

[10] Coordination and support services for the purposes of funding allocations consist mainly of logistical support services for the wider humanitarian community.

Committments by sector, 2006



[a] Agriculture includes food security, livelihood support and livestock.

Grant allocations by organization[11]

25. Central Emergency Response Fund grant allocations were made to eight United Nations entities[12] and IOM. (See annex VI for a detailed breakdown of allocations by organization.)

26. A total of $108 million was approved for World Food Programme (WFP) projects through the Central Emergency Response Fund grant facility. WFP was the largest recipient of funds in 2006. Most of the funds received ($76.5 million) were disbursed under the rapid-response grant component in support of life-saving food distributions by averting pipeline breaks or restoring reduced rations to beneficiaries in 22 countries around the world. Some $17 million enabled WFP to provide support to the wider humanitarian community through humanitarian air services, United Nations joint logistics centres and information and communications technology support services.

[11] Grant allocation amounts reflect totals in approved project amounts by the end of 2006, and do not reflect certified financial statements, as financial reports for 2006 have not yet been completely finalized. Some funds for projects approved close to the end of 2006 were disbursed in 2007.

[12] World Food Programme, United Nations Children's Fund, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, World Health Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund and United Nations Office for Project Services.

27. A total of $58.8 million was approved for United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) projects through the Central Emergency Response Fund grant facility for 24 rapid-onset emergencies and 13 underfunded crises, complementing its internal loan facility by ensuring the continuation and scaling up of an appropriate emergency response. This was clearly demonstrated in the response to the crisis in Chad when 50,000 Chadians had been internally displaced as a result of violence. Funds allowed UNICEF to build on its national and emergency programmes in eastern Chad to provide relief to internally displaced persons through the provision of safe drinking water. Access to clean water prevented the spread of water-borne diseases and significantly improved water provision in an area where only 3 per cent of the population had access to safe drinking water. The procurement, delivery and installation of the materials for the water pumping stations were completed within three weeks.

28. A total of $34.1 million was approved for projects of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) through the Central Emergency Response Fund grant facility. UNHCR provided assistance and protection services to refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, funds enabled UNHCR to continue emergency projects in the returnee areas of South Kivu in the east and Equateur in the north-west. A lack of funds would have led to the suspension of critical activities for some 40,000 returnees. Currently, returnees have access to basic services in Nundu and Fizi, thus significantly lowering the death toll among the affected population.

29. A total of $25.2 million was approved for World Health Organization (WHO) projects through the Central Emergency Response Fund grant facility. Prior to the allocation from the underfunded grant element, most health projects under the Liberia appeal for 2006 were not funded, with the national measles immunization campaign being particularly affected. Funds of the Central Emergency Response Fund bridged the gap, and it was possible to train vaccinators and recorders for the campaign. Some 100,000 doses of measles vaccine were purchased and administered, resulting in a child coverage rate of 97 per cent. In Eritrea, funding improved the coverage of vitamin A supplementation from 9.8 per cent to 95 per cent among infants and supported 96 health facilities that handle severe malnutrition, particularly among infants. The measles vaccination coverage in the southern part of Eritrea increased from 63.5 per cent to 95 per cent among children aged from 12 to 23 months. In the Central African Republic, funding made it possible to implement successfully the national immunization programme after it almost collapsed because of a lack of logistic and financial support.

30. A total of $17.6 million was approved for projects of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAC) through the grant facility. FAO assisted newly internally displaced persons outside camps in Darfur to protect their livestock assets through vaccinations, animal health care and crop and vegetable cultivation. Major achievements, thanks to the quick access to funds from the Central Emergency Response Fund, included the fast restoration of livelihoods of small-holding pastoralists in the Horn of Africa following the protracted drought. Such time-critical interventions were crucial to the survival of pastoralist communities that rely entirely on small-scale farming. In Burundi, the Fund facilitated the propagation of disease-free cassava for distribution and planting, which improved the food security of thousands of vulnerable households, as well as internally

displaced persons and refugees. According to FAO, the Central Emergency Response Fund raised the organization's funding coverage in Darfur by 10 per cent, thereby permitting the restoration of vital productive assets.

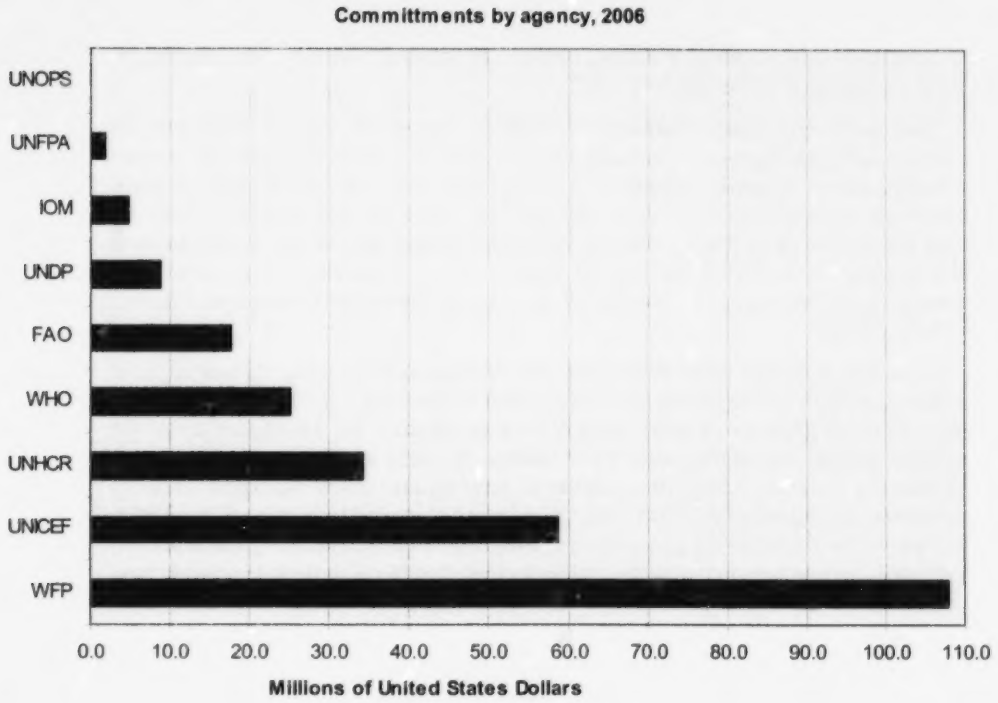
31. A total of $8.7 million was approved for United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) projects through the Central Emergency Response Fund grant facility. UNDP managed projects to support humanitarian mine action efforts in Guinea-Bissau and emergency rehabilitation of community infrastructure in the occupied Palestinian territory. The Fund was also instrumental in enabling UNDP support for system-wide common security services in Ethiopia and Sri Lanka, for which UNDP is administering grants on behalf of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security.

32. A total of $1.7 million was approved for United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) projects through the grant facility. UNFPA provided crucial reproductive health support to women and girls in crisis-affected communities in the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Guinea, Liberia, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, the Congo and Kenya. The implementation of the minimum initial service package[13] contributed to saving the lives of pregnant women. Support from the Central Emergency Response Fund in those emergencies further facilitated the provision of necessary maternal care, the implementation of HIV prevention and the provision of appropriate health care and social support for victims of sexual violence and abuse. In Liberia, funds supported efforts to mitigate the effects of rape through the provision of rape treatment kits and training in the clinical management of rape for health practitioners from government, international and national non-governmental organizations and United Nations partners.

33. A total of $230,000 was approved for one United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) project through the grant facility. UNOPS carried out water and sanitation activities in Cité Soleil, the largest slum in Haiti. The sanitation of open-air canals was necessary to mitigate health risks to the population living in the surrounding areas.

34. A total of $4.7 million was approved for IOM projects through the grant facility. In response to the effects of Typhoon Durian in the Philippines, a Central Emergency Response Fund grant enabled IOM to deliver over 3,000 tons of emergency relief goods to more than 20,000 families on behalf of 60 agencies and the Government of the Philippines.

[13] The minimum initial service package for reproductive health is a set of priority activities related to safe motherhood, HIV prevention and addressing sexual violence.



III. Fund administration, management and guidance

35. The Emergency Relief Coordinator manages the Central Emergency Response Fund under the authority delegated to him or her by the Secretary-General.[14] The Emergency Relief Coordinator is supported by a small secretariat and by other branches of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.[15]

Central Emergency Response Fund secretariat

36. In addition to processing grant requests, the Central Emergency Response Fund secretariat provides guidance and advice on the grant request process to country teams under the leadership of the humanitarian/resident coordinator, as well as to the headquarters of the organizations requesting grants. Following a programmatic review of requests, in close collaboration with the Coordination and Response Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Fund secretariat provides the Emergency Relief Coordinator with the information necessary to decide on grant allocations.

37. The secretariat has begun implementing a training programme that, combined with the development of additional guidelines, is aimed at improving the quality of

[14] See General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 60/124.
[15] See ST/SGB/2006/10.

requests and reducing procedural time lags. Activities have continued into 2007, with the conduct of two training sessions for United Nations entities and IOM in New York and Geneva. More training sessions are scheduled to take place in Dakar, Nairobi and Rome in June and July 2007.

38. The secretariat also maintains a website (http://cerf.un.org) dedicated to providing the latest figures on commitments as well as information on how money has been utilized in each country.[16] The website serves as the Fund's primary information management tool. Although the website was significantly improved during the course of 2006 by making updated information readily available in a timely manner, it would further benefit from a more systematic collection of data and analysis on the impact of funding of the Central Emergency Response Fund at the country level.

39. It became apparent early in the first year of Central Emergency Response Fund operations — with contributions at $299 million — that the volume of projects and workload would grow much more quickly than anticipated. By 30 August 2006, the Fund had already committed over $173 million to eight organizations in over 30 countries. By the end of 2006, the number of projects processed was approximately three times the number anticipated at the time of the establishment of the Fund. That, coupled with the development of guidelines, procedures, training modules and a dedicated, comprehensive website, made it clear that the five-post secretariat was not adequate.

Financial management

40. The Fund, as a sub-account of the United Nations General Trust Fund, is governed by United Nations rules and regulations and administered financially by the Office of the United Nations Controller.

41. The standard rate for programme support services provided by the United Nations for activities financed by extrabudgetary activities, which has been approved by the General Assembly, is 13 per cent of direct expenditure. The Controller has determined that the extrabudgetary activities do not warrant a levy of full support costs and has exceptionally reduced the rate of programme support costs to 10 per cent on allocations/expenditure from the Central Emergency Response Fund trust fund, of which 3 per cent is retained by the United Nations Secretariat and up to 7 per cent can be taken by agencies. The 3 per cent retention by the United Nations Secretariat will cover all costs associated with administering the Fund, including the costs of its secretariat.

42. Although there are letters of understanding[17] concerning the disbursement of funds of the Central Emergency Response Fund to agencies, the Office of the United Nations Controller is in the process of approving one standard draft letter, which would then be used as an umbrella letter to reduce the processing time for the disbursement of funds. Discussions on other financial and administrative issues are continuing, led by the Office of the Controller, with the respective administrative and financial officers of Fund-eligible organizations.

[16] In accordance with ST/SGB/2006/10.

[17] A letter of understanding is a prerequisite for the disbursement of funds.

Inter-agency consultations

43. Throughout the establishment and operationalization of the Fund, the Emergency Relief Coordinator has consulted and briefed the principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on the use of the Fund. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group has supported the development of a recommendation on how to engage the Standing Committee more systematically in providing guidance and support to the Emergency Relief Coordinator in the use and impact of the Central Emergency Response Fund. To that end, a paper was developed outlining issues and recommendations that resulted from consultations with participation in the inter-agency meetings on the Fund in early 2007.

44. Consultation with members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee takes place regularly through inter-agency meetings, which are facilitated by the Central Emergency Response Fund secretariat. Those meetings provide a consistent forum for inter-agency consultations on the development of procedures and the management and use of the Fund. Fund-eligible partners and the three non-governmental organization consortiums have standing invitations to those meetings.

45. Key achievements reached through the inter-agency consultations include the finalization of the Central Emergency Response Fund narrative reporting framework, finalization of the procedures for allocating funds for underfunded emergencies for 2007 and support for country allocations for the recent underfunded round of the Fund. Those meetings have also served as a useful forum for the discussion of pertinent issues related to the Fund, including allocations from the rapid-response and underfunded grant elements, upcoming Fund training sessions, advocacy efforts and lessons learned from the development and processing of grant requests.

46. Continued inter-agency consultations at all levels will be critical to strengthen common policies and procedures and improve the overall working of the Fund. In this context, it is important to ensure that the Fund is a shared responsibility of the humanitarian community, which extends, inter alia, to the monitoring and evaluation of funded projects.

Central Emergency Response Fund Advisory Group

47. The Advisory Group[18] met twice in 2006 to provide policy guidance and advice on the use and impact of the Fund and to examine its performance. At its last meeting, the Advisory Group expressed its appreciation for the Fund as a valuable tool in meeting time-critical and demonstrable humanitarian needs and enabling equitable responses to neglected emergencies. It was noted that further improvements towards those objectives were warranted, including optimizing complementarity among the various humanitarian financing mechanisms. The Advisory Group recommended further administrative improvements, and emphasized the importance of a field-driven approach in identifying and prioritizing life-saving activities. The Advisory Group reaffirmed the importance of national and international non-governmental organizations as strategic partners that should play a

[18] The Secretary-General appointed a 12-member Advisory Group and four alternates to provide advice and guidance on the use and impact of the Fund.

more active role in programming and strategizing humanitarian response. In this respect, it recommended that ways to foster the greater engagement of non-governmental organizations be explored.

Reviews of the Fund

48. In January 2007, Save the Children UK released a position paper on the Fund, in particular on the lack of direct access to the Fund for non-governmental organizations. On the occasion of the first anniversary of the Fund, Oxfam International released a briefing paper on the Fund's achievements and challenges, particularly with respect to greater non-governmental organization involvement. The Canadian International Development Agency funded an independent, preliminary review of the first year of operations of the Fund. Those papers are publicly available, and recommendations contained in them are being taken into consideration for the further improvement of overall Fund operations.

49. As requested by the General Assembly, an independent review of the Fund will be commissioned at the end of the second year of operation[19] to assess, inter alia, both the grant and revolving elements of the Fund, its administration, criteria for resource allocations, actions and responses supported by it and its ability to meet its objectives, and the Secretary-General will submit a report in that regard to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session.[20]

50. Preparations for that review are under way. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has commissioned an interim independent review on the performance of the Fund to serve as a baseline for the planned external evaluation in 2008, by identifying the current status of implementation, particularly at the country level. The review will explore how the Fund is contributing in practice towards effectively promoting the more timely, predictable, equitable, effective and accountable humanitarian response requested. This will include an assessment of management processes, operations and results. A summary of the findings will be shared with interested stakeholders.

IV. Observations and issues

Field-level coordination

51. Experience to date suggests that the Central Emergency Response Fund has been most effective where country-level leadership is the strongest and decision-making is coordinated and broad-based. In the 35 countries where funds have been applied in 2006, humanitarian/resident coordinators and country teams have played a crucial role in identifying response gaps, prioritizing the most urgent life-saving needs and determining how to best use funds.

52. For example, in Burundi, following the Emergency Relief Coordinator's allocation from the underfunded grant component, the Humanitarian Coordinator convened a meeting of government officials, United Nations agencies and

[19] March 2008.
[20] See resolution 60/124.

organizations and non-governmental organizations to review needs-assessment data and identify gaps and agree on priorities for the use of funds from the Central Emergency Response Fund. This illustrates how the Fund can contribute to strengthening coordination in the field by enabling joint prioritization, planning and decision-making.

53. Similarly, in those countries where the cluster leadership approach has been implemented, humanitarian coordinators have used cluster leads and coordination mechanisms to help prioritize needs and select projects for funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund. In Liberia, the humanitarian coordinator identified three priority areas for funding and then asked the respective cluster leads to get agreement from within the cluster on funding priorities. This ensured that all members of the cluster were included in the identification of funding priorities.

54. However, for country-level coordination and decision-making to be effective, more targeted training and guidance is required for both humanitarian/resident coordinators and country teams operating in countries likely to request funds from the Central Emergency Response Fund. Such training would promote a better understanding of the Fund's policies and procedures and ensure that the appropriate coordination mechanisms are in place to facilitate decision-making at the country level.

Existing funding mechanisms complemented by the Central Emergency Response Fund

55. In some countries, the Central Emergency Response Fund works alongside other humanitarian financing mechanisms under the leadership of the humanitarian coordinator.[21] The successful interaction of these mechanisms depends on the degree of coordination, complementarity and strategic planning at the country level.

56. Common humanitarian funds were initiated by a small group of donors to give the humanitarian coordinator increased access to and authority over funds that could be used quickly and strategically in large, complex crises. These funds largely follow the same system of decision-making prioritization as the Central Emergency Response Fund, but overall authority lies with the humanitarian coordinator and allocation decisions are made exclusively at the country level. Pooled funds have been employed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. In both places, the amounts are large ($92 million in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and $143 million in the Sudan in 2006), are linked to activities identified in the broader appeals and represent a significant proportion of overall humanitarian funding.

57. Like common humanitarian funds, emergency response funds are country-level pooled funding mechanisms that provide rapid access to cash for humanitarian assistance actors on the ground. Emergency response fund allocations are considerably smaller than the Central Emergency Response Fund and common humanitarian fund grants (ranging from $20,000 to $100,000), are administered at

[21] The Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan have country-level common humanitarian funds. Emergency response funds are established in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan, Angola, Liberia, Ethiopia, Indonesia and Somalia.

the country level by inter-agency review boards that decide allocations, and target small, localized initiatives implemented mainly by local organizations.[22]

58. Where these pooled funds are in place, the humanitarian coordinator has an important role to play in applying the most suitable funding tools and ensuring complementarity among them. Recent experience with the underfunded grant requests from the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo demonstrated that the Central Emergency Response Fund grant requests built on the established common humanitarian fund framework. The complementary relationship between emergency response funds and the Central Emergency Response Fund is not as evident. This is due, in part, to the fact that emergency response fund allocations are often very small. More clarity is therefore required to determine the comparative advantages of each of these mechanisms so that funds may be applied where they are most effective. Such clarification should be followed by the development of additional guidelines and training for humanitarian/resident coordinators and country teams.

59. The effectiveness of such complementary relationships also requires better systems of common fund management at the country level to ensure predictability of allocations, a reduction in administrative and transaction costs and faster disbursements. The application, use and decision-making practices of all humanitarian funding mechanisms that operate under the humanitarian coordinator must be harmonized so as not to place undue burdens on the organizations that manage them.

60. In addition, some operational humanitarian agencies maintain their own emergency funds to allow agencies to ramp up operations after the onset of crisis. In conjunction with humanitarian financing mechanisms managed by the humanitarian coordinator, the emergency reserves of United Nations entities and IOM are used to finance initial needs in any given emergency operation. These emergency reserves function as internal revolving loan mechanisms to provide emergency allocations at the onset of a new crisis. Where the Central Emergency Response Fund has been employed in sudden-onset emergencies, it has acted in tandem with these emergency funds. For example, the UNICEF Emergency Programme Fund and the FAO Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities have worked in conjunction with the Central Emergency Response Fund, allowing the organizations to respond at the very outset of an emergency by fronting cash to begin relief operations on the promise of an allocation from the Emergency Relief Coordinator. The release of funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund soon thereafter has then allowed the response to continue and to be scaled up prior to the receipt of major bilateral assistance. Similarly, the Central Emergency Response Fund has worked in tandem with the UNHCR Operational Reserve, thereby contributing to the strengthening of the timely response of UNHCR in new emergencies by providing immediate funds to support and enhance its overall response capacity, for example, in Sri Lanka and Kenya. In Iraq and Timor-Leste, WFP draws on its Immediate Response Account to complement the Central Emergency Response Fund. During 2006, Immediate Response Account advances were authorized in the Sudan and

[22] Since 1997, the six emergency response funds in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Liberia and Somalia have disbursed $65.78 million and financed 538 projects covering a wide range of activities.

Ethiopia to procure food urgently required and later revolved with Central Emergency Response Fund allocations.

61. The Disaster Relief Emergency Fund of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies complements the Central Emergency Response Fund in that funds are allocated mainly for smaller-scale disasters for which no international appeals are launched. The Disaster Relief Emergency Fund has a unique global capability to respond locally to smaller-scale emergencies, as the capacity of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies can quickly be boosted to provide support and disaster response team deployment.

Improving the timeliness of disbursement

62. The Central Emergency Response Fund experienced initial delays in connection with the disbursement of funds that presented challenges to both the recipient organizations and its own secretariat. The longest delays have been encountered at the project submission stage, where revisions of the technical or financial aspects of project proposals were often required. In some cases, the turnaround time for revised project submissions was within one working day. In other cases, the delay in receiving a final eligible project proposal was significantly longer, in a few instances up to three months. In addition, the pace at which organizations complete letters of understanding and return them to the Fund secretariat to process for disbursement varies significantly from one organization to another, which results in further delays.

63. As the process became more streamlined, progress was made and the speed of disbursements significantly improved. Further improvements are being tackled through the development of comprehensive guidelines and more targeted training for field and headquarters staff. As mentioned above, the finalization of the umbrella letter of understanding would also improve the speed of disbursements.

Central Emergency Response Fund and non-governmental organizations

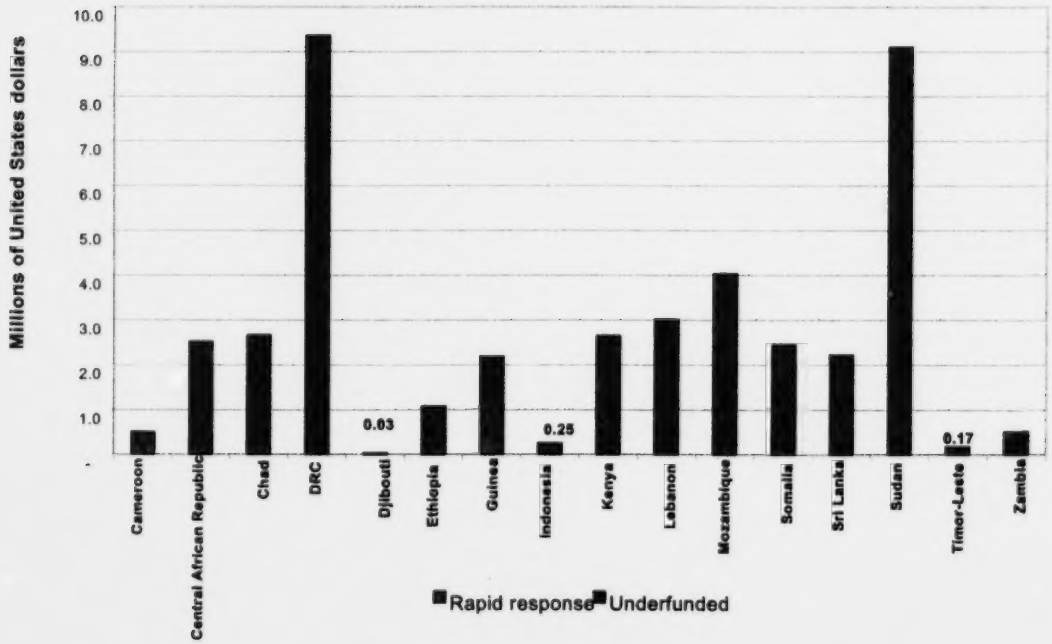
64. Only United Nations entities and IOM are currently eligible recipients of the Fund.[23] Some non-governmental organizations have raised the issue of direct access to the Fund. Recognizing that the diverse resources and expertise of non-United Nations partners are essential to enhancing the effectiveness of humanitarian response, Central Emergency Response Fund guidance recommends an inclusive approach in the development of requests. In particular, the guidance recommends that humanitarian/resident coordinators insist on joint prioritization of needs within a cluster, as well as the arrangements for the implementation of services, when submitting a request.

[23] In its resolution 60/124, the General Assembly called upon the Secretary-General to establish the Central Emergency Response Fund on the basis of his report A/60/432, which specifies "that the same humanitarian organizations [i.e., United Nations entities and IOM] that have access to the current Fund be eligible for grants and loans from the upgraded Fund." See also resolution 46/182.

65. Various mechanisms are currently being explored to provide funds from the Central Emergency Response Fund quickly to non-United Nations partners, in particular non-governmental organizations. To date, the Emergency Relief Coordinator has approved funding to the rapid-response mechanism in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Somalia Humanitarian Response Fund, as innovative approaches for non-governmental organizations to have access to the Fund. The creation of more rapid mechanisms for passing funds through Fund-eligible entities to non-governmental organizations has also been suggested as a longer-term arrangement, but more work needs to be done on this possibility.

66. Preliminary findings suggest that disbursements from Central Emergency Response Fund recipient entities to non-governmental organizations can be more than half of the funding received. For example, preliminary data show that out of $38 million allocated to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2006, about 64 per cent was disbursed to non-governmental organizations. Non-governmental organizations, along with other humanitarian partners, also benefit from Central Emergency Response Fund funding channelled to common services, as in the example of humanitarian air services (e.g., Mozambique, Central African Republic, Somalia), logistical support (e.g., Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique) and security projects (e.g., Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire).

Funding of common services, 2006



67. Increased participation of non-governmental organizations in inclusive country-team structures in all programme development phases — assessment, prioritization, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation — would benefit the Central Emergency Response Fund. In addition, further discussions on concerns of non-governmental organizations, including the timeliness of forward disbursements, would be mutually beneficial.

Reporting on Central Emergency Response Fund grants

68. As the Central Emergency Response Fund was created by the General Assembly and is financially administered by the United Nations Secretariat, it is subject to United Nations financial regulations and rules, including internal and external auditing procedures, which require compliance with standard United Nations Secretariat reporting policies, timelines and formats. In addition, the Fund aims to be transparent and accountable to all of its stakeholders, including donors and the public. Regular updates on the website of the Fund have served to increase significantly its transparency.

69. The Central Emergency Response Fund secretariat has consulted United Nations entities and IOM on reporting arrangements in line with the principles of the good humanitarian donorship initiative. Agreements have been reached on narrative reporting requirements. Similar discussions on the finalization of the financial reporting format and streamlined financial procedures, including the proposed umbrella letter of understanding, are currently continuing.

V. Fund levels

70. The immediate operationalization of the upgraded Central Emergency Response Fund has been possible through the broad financial and political support of a wide range of Member States. The generosity of 73 partners — including Member States, local governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector — has resulted in contributions of more than $565 million to the Fund in 2006 and the first four months of 2007.

71. The first high-level conference on the Central Emergency Response Fund, in December 2006, was successful, with more than 100 Member States and other partners in attendance.[24] As at 30 April 2007, 56 States, 1 local government and 2 private organizations — as well as individuals making contributions through the United Nations Foundation — have pledged more than $344 million for 2007, with paid contributions standing at $266.6 million. In that context, the Fund has been the best-supported and most rapidly implemented mechanism of the three funds established at the Millennium Summit, in September 2005.[25] It is hoped that the number of government contributions and the overall level of contributions will rise significantly during the year.

72. Another high-level donor conference for the Fund will take place towards the end of 2007. The event will be an opportunity to make new pledges and increase broad-based political support for the Fund. It is important to note that contributions

[24] A total of $340 million was pledged by 51 donors.

[25] Central Emergency Response Fund, Democracy Fund and Peacebuilding Fund.

to the Fund should be additional to current commitments to humanitarian programming and not to the detriment of resources made available for international cooperation for development.[26] A few donors have opted to make multi-year contribution commitments, and other donors are strongly encouraged to do the same in order to enhance the predictability of funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund. The mobilization of resources from the private sector, foundations and local governments should be further pursued.

73. The future success and sustainability of the Central Emergency Response Fund depend on increasing funding levels to $500 million (including the loan element) by the end of 2008, a target endorsed by the General Assembly.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

74. Since its launch in March 2006, the upgraded Central Emergency Response Fund has demonstrated its value as a shared tool of the humanitarian community by making significant progress towards the objectives set by the General Assembly. The Fund has supported United Nations entities and IOM in their response to sudden-onset and rapidly deteriorating crises and underfunded emergencies.

75. The Fund has been most effective where country-level leadership and joint decision-making are strongest and has acted as a catalyst to improve joint prioritization at the country level with the humanitarian/resident coordinators playing an increased facilitative and strategic role. The Fund has worked in tandem with the cluster approach, where implemented, to improve coordination and strengthen capacity, particularly in sectors that suffer from a lack of funds.

76. While recognizing the Fund's ability to provide funding for humanitarian emergencies based on demonstrable needs, taking stock of the experiences and lessons learned in the start-up phase of the Fund is required. Further streamlining of administrative procedures to avoid delays in disbursement, refining policies with respect to funding criteria and monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the Fund must continue to be a shared responsibility among all Fund stakeholders, including non-United Nations partners.

77. The timeliness of grant disbursement has significantly improved as the Fund streamlines its operations. Although some delays persist, further improvements in this regard are continuing. Ensuring that the Fund operates in an effective, transparent, and accountable manner requires constant training and guidance. The improvement of information management and reporting systems and the further refinement of the funding criteria are prerequisites for its growing success. The aforementioned multi-pronged activities necessitate the further revision of the structure of the Fund secretariat to ensure adequate human resource capacity to complete the required tasks necessary for the sustainability of the Fund.

78. The strong support of Member States for the upgraded Central Emergency Response Fund since its launch in March 2006 is welcome. To ensure the continued success of the Fund and its valuable contribution to emergency response around the world, long-term political and financial support is essential. The future success and sustainability of the Fund depend on increasing overall funding levels to

[26] See resolution 60/124.

$500 million by the end of 2008, a target endorsed by the General Assembly. A high-level donor conference on the Fund will take place towards the end of 2007.

79. Recognizing the importance of broadening partnerships at all levels to ensure the future success and sustainability of the Fund, my recommendations are as follows:

(a) Member States are invited to make and increase their contributions to the Central Emergency Response Fund so that it may reach its $500 million target by the end of 2008. In addition to reaching that target, the Fund requires sustained and predictable financial support to become the efficient and effective tool needed by the people affected by sudden and ongoing crises. Member States are therefore encouraged to make multi-year commitments to the Fund;

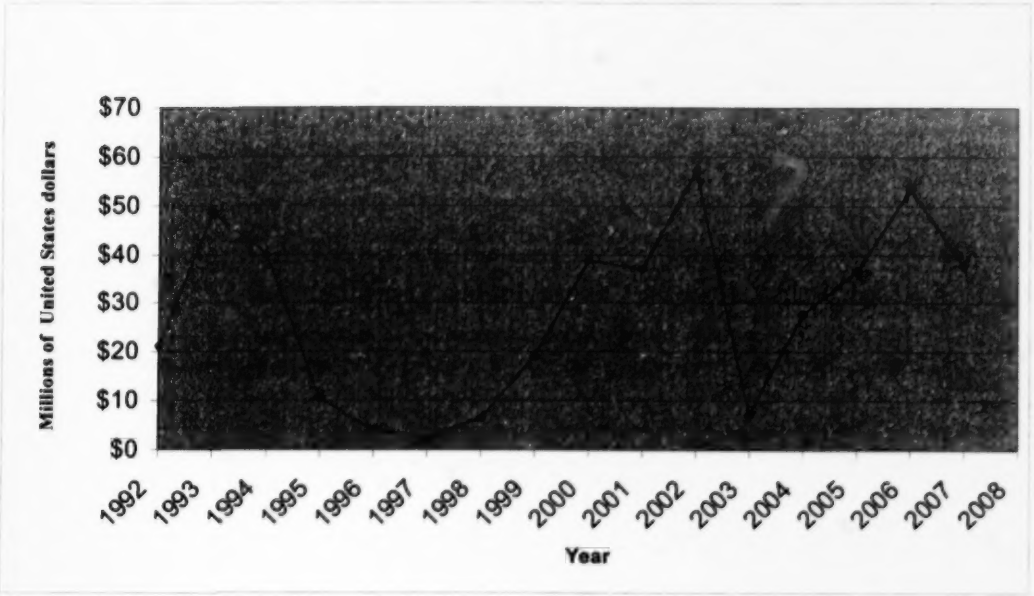
(b) Member States, donors, relevant United Nations humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations should work to improve the provision of timely and accurate information on contributions and utilization of humanitarian funds through the United Nations Financial Tracking Service;

(c) The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and IOM should work even more closely together, and should increase their cooperation with non-governmental organizations to ensure that the Fund continues to contribute towards effectively promoting a more timely, predictable, equitable, effective and accountable humanitarian response. In this context, I look forward to the two-year independent review, which will assess both the grant and revolving elements of the Fund, its administration, criteria for resource allocations, actions and responses supported by it and its ability to meet its objectives;

(d) The Central Emergency Response Fund secretariat should be strengthened significantly to ensure that it is adequately resourced to meet the needs of effective and transparent administration of the Fund.

Annex I

Total Central Emergency Response Fund loans, 1992-2007, as at 30 April 2007



Annex II

Central Emergency Response Fund loans, 2006 and 2007

2006

Agency	*Country*	*Amount (United States dollars)*
UNICEF	Sudan	7 500 000
UNICEF	Sudan	1 000 000
FAO	Sudan	8 422 337
Department of Peacekeeping Operations Mine Action Service	Sudan	1 000 000
UNICEF	Sudan	4 000 000
UNICEF	Sudan	6 300 000
WFP	Sudan	18 000 000
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	Sudan	4 000 000
Department of Peacekeeping Operations Mine Action Service	Afghanistan	1 650 000
UNDP	Sudan (Juba)	1 400 000
Total		**53 272 337**

2007
(as at 30 April)

Agency	*Country*	*Amount (United States dollars)*
Department of Peacekeeping Operations Mine Action Service	Sudan	3 000 000
WFP	Sudan	10 000 000
UNICEF	Sudan	15 000 000
FAO	Sudan	9 679 925
Total		**37 679 925**

Annex III

Contributions as at 30 April 2007

(United States dollars)

	2006	2007	
Donor	*Received*	*Pledged*	*Received*
Algeria[a]		10 000.00	10 000.00
Andorra	25 440.00	25 440.00	
Antigua and Barbuda	5 000.00	5 000.00	5 000.00
Armenia	5 000.00		
Australia	7 600 000.00	7 908 000.00	
Austria		409 836.00	
Azerbaijan	20 000.00	20 000.00	20 000.00
Bahamas		50 000.00	
Bangladesh	5 000.00		
Belgium	2 666 194.01	2 929 740.00	
Brunei Darussalam		50 000.00	50 000.00
Bulgaria		10 000.00	10 000.00
Canada	21 941 309.26		
Chile		30 000.00	
China		1 000 000.00	
Croatia	5 000.00	20 000.00	20 000.00
Cyprus		30 000.00	30 000.00
Czech Republic	113 301.61	115 000.00	
Denmark	8 401 243.38	8 742 383.64	8 742 383.64
Djibouti	2 000.00	2 000.00	
Ecuador[a]		20 000.00	20 000.00
Egypt	15 000.00	15 000.00	
El Salvador		2 000.00	
Estonia	52 102.00	38 000.00	
Finland	5 154 000.00	6 670 000.00	
France	1 263 800.00	1 312 100.00	1 312 100.00
Germany[a]		6 597 500.00	6 597 500.00
Greece	100 000.00		
Grenada	10 000.00		
Hungary		10 000.00	
Iceland[a]	150 000.00	250 000.00	250 000.00
India	1 000 000.00	1 000 000.00	1 000 000.00
Indonesia	50 000.00	100 000.00	
Ireland	12 601 974.00	26 273 974.00	26 273 974.00
Israel		30 000.00	15 000.00

	2006	2007	
Donor	*Received*	*Pledged*	*Received*
Italy		1 289 482.50	
Jamaica		5 000.00	
Japan	7 500 000.00		
Kazakhstan	25 000.00		
Kuwait	200 000.00		
Lebanon		3 000.00	
Liechtenstein	100 000.00	123 243.78	123 243.78
Luxembourg	4 000 000.00	5 320 800.00	
Malaysia	50 000.00	100 000.00	100 000.00
Maldives		1 000.00	
Malta[a]		10 000.00	10 000.00
Mexico	50 000.00		
Monaco	25 000.00	35 000.00	
Morocco	5 000.00	5 000.00	
Netherlands	51 860 000.00	53 400 000.00	53 400 000.00
New Zealand		1 000 000.00	
Nigeria	100 000.00		
Norway	29 993 971.19	55 066 049.29	55 066 049.29
Pakistan	20 000.00	20 000.00	
Philippines		5 000.00	5 000.00
Poland	250 000.00		
Portugal	254 220.00	268 540.00	268 540.00
Republic of Korea	5 000 000.00		
Qatar	2 000 000.00		
Saudi Arabia[b]	50 000.00	50 000.00	50 000.00
Slovenia	10 000.00	10 000.00	
South Africa	288 577.15	240 000.00	240 000.00
Spain	9 999 984.00	19 953 000.00	
Sri Lanka	10 000.00	10 000.00	10 000.00
Sweden[a]	41 093 249.80	52 000 000.00	29 003 998.35
Switzerland	3 928 097.01	8 375 000.00	
Thailand	10 000.00	10 000.00	10 000.00
Trinidad and Tobago	20 000.00	20 000.00	
Turkey[a]	300 000.00	300 000.00	300 000.00
United Kingdom	69 928 000.00	83 726 040.00	83 726 040.00
United States	10 000 000.00		
Disaster Resource Network	10 000.00	10 000.00	
Humanity First		10 000.00	

	2006	2007	
Donor	*Received*	*Pledged*	*Received*
Hyogo Prefecture, Japan	424 989.38	425 221.62	
Private donations through United Nations Foundation		117 959.00	117 959.00
Total	**298 692 452.79**	**345 585 309.83**	**266 786 788.06**

[a] Contributions were received near the end of 2006 and were pledged and intended for 2007.
[b] Saudi Arabia will contribute $50,000 per year for 20 years.

Annex IV

Total committed funds and percentage of total by country as at 31 December 2006*

Country	Rapid response	Underfunded — tranche 1	Underfunded — tranche 2	Total committed	Percentage of total committed
		United States dollars			
Democratic Republic of the Congo		17 000 000	21 000 000	38 000 000	14.7
Sudan	35 519 099			35 519 099	13.7
Afghanistan	32 304 627			32 304 627	12.5
Kenya	26 186 918	1 000 000		27 186 918	10.5
Somalia	16 609 055			16 609 055	6.4
Sri Lanka	9 998 966			9 998 966	3.9
Ethiopia	8 972 986	1 000 000		9 972 986	3.8
Chad	3 152 623	6 268 442		9 421 065	3.6
Eritrea	3 886 740		1 998 565	5 885 305	2.3
Côte d'Ivoire	1 752 282	1 000 000	3 000 000	5 752 282	2.2
Central African Republic	2 690 849	999 786	2 002 729	5 693 364	2.2
Timor-Leste	5 547 931			5 547 931	2.1
Niger	5 503 823			5 503 823	2.1
Lebanon	5 000 000			5 000 000	1.9
Occupied Palestinian territory	4 829 402			4 829 402	1.9
Burundi		2 083 330	1 986 517	4 069 847	1.6
Iraq	3 998 590			3 998 590	1.5
Liberia			3 983 681	3 983 681	1.5
Myanmar	3 803 740			3 803 740	1.5
Philippines	2 598 305			2 598 305	1.0
Colombia	2 220 939			2 220 939	0.9
Mauritania			2 075 604	2 075 604	0.8
Congo		1 000 000	1 000 000	2 000 000	0.8
Burkina Faso			2 000 000	2 000 000	0.8
Zimbabwe		999 973	999 990	1 999 963	0.8
Guinea		997 550	999 999	1 997 549	0.8
Mali			1 985 598	1 985 598	0.8
Djibouti	1 905 355			1 905 355	0.7
Indonesia	1 904 864			1 904 864	0.7
Guinea-Bissau	1 361 531			1 361 531	0.5

Country	*Rapid response*	*Underfunded — tranche 1*	*Underfunded — tranche 2*	*Total committed*	*Percentage of total committed*
		United States dollars			
Syrian Arab Republic	1 177 096			1 177 096	0.5
Haiti		1 000 000		1 000 000	0.4
Jordan	1 000 000			1 000 000	0.4
Cameroon	500 000			500 000	0.2
Zambia		500 000		500 000	0.2
Total	**182 425 720**	**33 849 082**	**43 032 683**	**259 307 485**	**100.0**

* Committed funds reflect project amounts approved by the Emergency Relief Coordinator and do not reflect actual certified financial reports, as financial reports for 2006 have not yet been finalized.

Annex V

Total committed funds and percentage of total by sector as at 31 December 2006*

Sector	*Total committed (United States dollars)*	*Percentage of total committed*
Food	74 321 952	28.66
Health	55 303 958	21.33
Multisector	48 094 878	18.55
Coordination and support services	34 475 820	13.30
Agriculture	17 771 944	6.85
Water and sanitation	15 232 172	5.87
Shelter and non-food items	8 234 761	3.18
Protection/human rights/rule of law	4 318 482	1.67
Education	1 036 718	0.40
Mine action	516 800	0.20
Total	**259 307 485**	**100.0**

* Committed funds reflect project amounts approved by the Emergency Relief Coordinator and do not reflect actual certified financial reports, as financial reports for 2006 have not yet been finalized.

Annex VI

Total committed funds and percentage of total by agency as at 31 December 2006*

Agency	*Total committed (United States dollars)*	*Percentage of total committed*
WFP	108 070 267	41.7
UNICEF	58 810 547	22.7
UNHCR	34 135 238	13.2
WHO	25 213 312	9.7
FAO	17 610 755	6.8
UNDP	8 733 103	3.4
IOM	4 765 383	1.8
UNFPA	1 738 880	0.7
UNOPS	230 000	0.1
Total	**259 307 485**	**100.0**

* Committed funds reflect project amounts approved by the Emergency Relief Coordinator and do not reflect actual certified financial reports, as financial reports for 2006 have not yet been finalized.

United Nations E/2007/74

Economic and Social Council

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Substantive session of 2007
Geneva, 2-27 July 2007
Item 6 of the provisional agenda*
Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

Note by the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

I have the honour to transmit to the Economic and Social Council a report prepared by the Committee on World Food Security of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on the progress in the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action, highlighting its linkages with the coordinated and integrated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits undertaken by the United Nations system.

* E/2007/100 and Corr.1

** The late submission of the present document is due to the fact that the Committee on World Food Security concluded its work on 10 May 2007.

07-37488 (E) 280607

Implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action: report of the Committee on World Food Security through the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to the Economic and Social Council

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 1999/212, the Economic and Social Council invited the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to transmit to the Council every four years, starting in 1999, a report prepared by the Committee on World Food Security on progress in the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action, highlighting its linkages with the coordinated and integrated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits undertaken by the United Nations system.

2. At its one hundred and twenty-fourth session (Rome, 23-28 June 2003), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Council considered and approved a report of the Committee on World Food Security through the FAO Council to the Economic and Social Council on the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action (CL 124/LIM/2). The report consisted, inter alia, of the Declaration of the World Food Summit: five years later and the recommendations of the Committee with regard to two sets of reviews carried out in 2000 and 2002.

3. The present quadrennial report consists of the recommendations of the Committee with regard to two sets of reviews carried out in 2004 and 2006, as reflected in the associated reports of the Committee and the Council. The highlight of the thirtieth session of the Committee in 2004 was the adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security.[1] As foreseen in objective 7.3 of the Plan of Action of the World Food Summit (1996), a special forum was held within the thirty-second session of the Committee on World Food Security in 2006 to undertake a major broad-based progress assessment of the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action and a midterm review of progress made in achieving the target of reducing by half the number of undernourished people no later than 2015. The special forum involved active participation from Governments, relevant international organizations and civil society actors.[2]

II. Extracts from the report of the Committee on World Food Security on its thirtieth session

(CL 127/10, paras. 11-17; 23-26)

4. The Committee reviewed the report on the progress made in the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action (see CFS:2004/3). It noted that the report was based on information received from 33 countries, the

[1] For the report of the Chair and the text of the Voluntary Guidelines see ftp://ftp.fao.org/unfao/bodies/council/cl27/J3345e1.pdf.

[2] See CL 131/6, appendix E (ftp://ftp.fao.org/unfao/bodies/council/cl31/j8689e.doc), for a Chairperson's summary of the outcome of the special forum.

European Union representing its 25 member States, three United Nations agencies and two international organizations, using the revised reporting format approved and recommended by the FAO Council at its one hundred and twenty-fifth session. The Committee underscored the need to improve the reporting rate to make the synthesis report more representative of all countries.

5. The Committee reiterated its concern that the progress made in reducing the number of undernourished people remained very slow at the global level. It recognized that the ongoing efforts to fight hunger were important, but insufficient. It also called for an adequate response to the challenges of poverty and hunger reduction and display of strong political will to ensure the achievement of the goals of the World Food Summit and the Millennium Declaration.

6. The Committee was informed by the delegation of Brazil that representatives from several countries, including Heads of State and Government, and from international organizations were meeting at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 20 September 2004, at the invitation of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil, for a summit of world leaders for "Action against hunger and poverty". The Committee was also informed by the Brazilian Ambassador that the purpose of the meeting was to mobilize international attention and political will to meet the challenges of combating hunger and poverty and to search for innovative financing mechanisms for development.

7. The Committee expressed concern that the performance of countries in tackling poverty and hunger and their progress towards internationally agreed targets was uneven. It noted with satisfaction that most countries with sound policies and well-developed institutional and physical infrastructure have succeeded in attaining economic growth and reducing poverty and food insecurity. The Committee regretted that there had been no progress towards the goals in some countries, and that in others poverty and hunger were even on the rise. In that context, the Committee re-emphasized the overriding importance of an enabling political, social, economic and sustainable natural resources environment conducive to economic growth and poverty reduction.

8. The Committee stressed that the success in improving food security is contingent upon improved economic conditions in general and agricultural growth in particular, and agreed that to be successful the fight against hunger needs to follow a broad-based approach, involving all stakeholders. In this connection, the Committee stressed the importance of a holistic approach in implementing the seven commitments in the World Food Summit Plan of Action. The Committee stressed that the primary responsibility for the fight against hunger rests with national Governments. The Committee pointed out that good governance and a conducive policy environment at the national level are essential for accelerated development and reduction of poverty and hunger. It also noted that progress in those areas should be supported by a conducive international environment. The need to enhance official development assistance (ODA), reduce export subsidies, trade-distorting domestic support to agriculture and the debt burden of developing countries were also underscored. The Committee underlined the importance of food aid, particularly in emergency situations, but stressed that hunger cannot be sustainably eradicated by food aid alone. The Committee also emphasized the importance of strengthening cooperation at subregional and regional levels in the struggle against

hunger. The Committee stressed the need for renewed attention to strengthen South-South cooperation.

9. Noting that the Heads of State and Government at the World Food Summit and the World Summit on Sustainable Development had identified rural development as essential to sustainable development and poverty eradication, several delegates stressed that all the underlying causes of rural poverty, hunger and environmental degradation could not be addressed through the use of sustainable agricultural practices alone. They expressed concern that food security and rural development issues were not adequately reflected in poverty reduction strategy papers of many countries and that there was a lack of interface between policies and programmes for agriculture and those for water management and biodiversity. In that connection, the Committee emphasized that monitoring should not only focus on the progress made in reducing hunger but also on the impact of policies and of a wide range of development efforts in the form of projects and programmes at the country level.

10. The Committee made the following recommendations:

For follow-up by FAO

- Undertake analytical studies of countries that have succeeded in reducing poverty and food insecurity so that lessons could be drawn for the benefit of other countries;
- Assist developing countries in building their capacity to benefit from the opportunities provided by a liberalized trading environment;
- Increase its efforts to carry out liaison with other United Nations organizations and international financial institutions in order to better address the complex issue of food insecurity, including education, health and other related social aspects.

For follow-up by countries

- Provide, in future reports on the follow-up on the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action, information on the impact of policy and specific projects and programmes on poverty reduction and food security;
- Strengthen national agriculture, rural development and food security policies and strategies and accord high priority in budget allocation to rural and agricultural development with the view to fostering economic growth and development and reducing poverty and food insecurity.

For the follow-up by donors and international organizations

- Give preference, where appropriate, to the purchase of local and regional produce in the provision of food aid to developing countries for emergency assistance and development programmes.

III. Extract from the reports on the third and fourth sessions of the Intergovernmental Working Group for the elaboration of a set of voluntary guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security

11. The Chair of the Intergovernmental Working Group for the elaboration of a set of voluntary guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food security in the context of national food security, Mr. Mohammad Saeid Noori-Naeeni (Islamic Republic of Iran), introduced the reports of the third and fourth sessions of the Working Group held at FAO headquarters from 5 to 10 July 2004 (CFS 2004/6) and on 23 September 2004 (IGWG RTFG 5/1). He recalled that the Working Group had been established by the FAO Council as a subsidiary body of the Committee on World Food Security at the Council's one hundred and twenty-third session and that the Council had mandated the Working Group to finish its work within a period of two years.

12. The Chair summarized the conduct and process of negotiations of the voluntary guidelines and presented the draft text of the voluntary guidelines as adopted by the Working Group.

13. The Committee on World Food Security commended the work of the Chair, the bureau of the Working Group and the members on their constructive negotiations. The Committee took particular note of the important role that other stakeholders had been able to play in the development of the guidelines. The Committee also expressed its appreciation for the work of the secretariat.

14. The Committee on World Food Security endorsed the voluntary guidelines as submitted and decided to transmit them to Council for final adoption.

IV. Extract from the report of the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Working Group for the elaboration of a set of voluntary guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food security in the context of national food security on its third session

(CL 131/6, paras. 7-9)

Special forum

15. The special forum was conducted as a multi-stakeholder dialogue according to commitment seven of the World Food Summit Plan of Action and the further guidance provided at the thirtieth and thirty-first sessions of the Committee on World Food Security.

16. The multi-stakeholder dialogue involved the members of the Committee and representatives of over 100 civil society organizations, including organizations of farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples, alliances against hunger, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, youth and women worldwide, and representatives of intergovernmental organizations.

17. The Chairperson's summary was neither negotiated nor agreed upon by the participants in the special forum, and is therefore not binding on the Committee, its members, civil society or other organizations that participated in it.

V. Extract from the report of the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on its one hundred and twenty-seventh session

(CL 127/REP, paras. 17-26)

18. The Council endorsed the report of the Committee on World Food Security on its thirtieth session and the conclusions and recommendations contained therein. With regard to the goal set out in the Rome Declaration on World Food Security adopted at the World Food Summit of reducing the number of undernourished to half of the 1996 level by no later than 2015, the Committee expressed its concern at the very slow progress at the global level. It stressed, in particular, that the situation in sub-Saharan African countries was disturbing. The Council noted that efforts to fight hunger remained insufficient. In that connection, the Council recalled that rural development was essential for sustainable development and for poverty and hunger eradication, and called on countries to accord higher priority to food security through agriculture and rural development in national strategies and budgets. Several members informed the Council of the actions taken by their Governments to overcome poverty and hunger.

19. The Council stressed that the primary responsibility for the fight against poverty and hunger rested with national Governments. It agreed on the overriding importance of strong political will and an enabling political, social, economic and sustainable natural resources environment conducive to economic growth and poverty reduction. The Council emphasized that efforts at national level should be supported by a conducive international environment and agreed on the need to enhance the allocation of resources, including ODA, to agricultural and rural development. Many members stressed the importance of alleviating the debt burden of developing countries. The Council underlined the importance of food aid, particularly in emergency situations, but stressed that hunger could not be sustainably eradicated by food aid alone.

20. The Council referred to the impact of the locust plague in West and North Africa, to the recent emergencies caused by a series of hurricanes in Central America and the Caribbean and to their effects on national food security and the worsening of poverty and hunger among the poor. Several members affected by the locust crisis expressed their gratitude to FAO and donor countries for the support provided and appealed for additional assistance to supplement major efforts already under way. The Council recommended that donor countries, FAO and the United Nations agencies concerned accelerate coordinated and urgent assistance to the affected countries to prevent the situation from deteriorating further.

21. The Council recognized, with satisfaction, that the Committee had welcomed the package of framework agreements of the World Trade Organization of July 2004 and supported the Committee's view that serious work was needed to provide substance to the consensus reached. It also supported the Committee's recommendation that trade analysis continue to be part of the assessment of the

world food security situation, and that FAO assist developing countries in building their capacity to benefit from the opportunities provided by a liberalized trading environment.

22. The Council supported the decision of the Committee to hold a special forum in 2006 to review progress made in the achievement of the objectives of the World Food Summit, consonant with the recommendations contained in objective 7.3, specifically 7.3 (g) and 7.3 (h). The Council agreed that at the thirty-first session of the Committee in 2005, a multi-stakeholder dialogue would take place, funded from within available resources, between Governments, international organizations and representatives of civil society.

23. The Council noted that, based on its recommendation at its one hundred and twenty-fifth session, the Committee on World Food Security had considered the revised reporting format for monitoring of the implementation of the follow-up to the World Food Summit. The Council agreed that the secretariat should convene a regionally balanced Working Group of Experts to review and finalize a revised reporting format and a related set of indicators.

VI. Intergovernmental Working Group for the Elaboration of a Set of Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security (September 2004)

24. The Council recalled that, in accordance with the request of the World Food Summit five years later, the Council, at its one hundred and twenty-third session, had established an Intergovernmental Working Group to elaborate a set of voluntary guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security. On 23 September 2004, at its fourth session, the Intergovernmental Working Group had adopted the draft text of the voluntary guidelines and had submitted it to the thirtieth session of the Committee on World Food Security (Rome, 20-23 September 2004). At that session, the Committee had endorsed the guidelines and had submitted them to the Council for final adoption.

25. The Council expressed its gratitude to the Chair of the Intergovernmental Working Group, its members and observers, and to the secretariat for the successful conclusion of the negotiations, which had been conducted in a transparent and participatory manner.

26. The Council adopted the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security. The Council recommended that members implement the Guidelines, decided to bring the Guidelines to the attention of the next session of the Conference and requested the Director-General to ensure their wide dissemination to all relevant United Nations bodies and agencies.

27. Many members also requested the secretariat to ensure, through mainstreaming and inclusion in the next programme of work and budget proposal, adequate follow-up action on the Voluntary Guidelines, including the preparation of information, communications and training materials, and to strengthen its capacity to assist members in implementing them. Many members also requested the secretariat to

seek additional extrabudgetary resources to further mainstream the Voluntary Guidelines.

VII. Extract from the report of the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on its one hundred and thirty-first session

(CL 131/REP, paras. 15-21)

28. The Council unanimously endorsed the report of the thirty-second session of the Committee on World Food Security. It commended the secretariat for the organization and conduct of the special forum, which had generated many interesting views on the hunger and poverty situation in the world and raised its concerns regarding the lack of progress towards the goal of the World Food Summit. While some members requested institutionalization of the special forum, others indicated they did not support such a proposal. Many members requested that options for continued engagement of multi-stakeholders in future years be discussed at the next session of the Committee.

29. The Council noted with satisfaction the steady progress with regard to the International Alliance Against Hunger and welcomed proposals for it to become increasingly self-financing in the future through mobilization of new resources, recognizing that FAO still had a significant catalytic role to play and that efforts should be undertaken to strengthen the dialogue and networking with other existing platforms at regional and global levels.

30. The Council recognized the initiative "Latin America and Caribbean without Hunger 2025" as an effort to promote the achievement of the objectives of the World Food Summit and the Millennium Development Goals.

31. The Council noted that emerging issues that were at present intensively discussed internationally, including biofuels, agricultural biodiversity, climate change and the use of the term "global public goods", had been raised in the discussions of the Committee on World Food Security.

32. The Council also noted that several countries were calling for rapid implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security, but stressed the voluntary nature of the guidelines.

33. While many members requested the secretariat to mainstream the Voluntary Guidelines in its work programme, others opposed it.

34. Many members invited FAO to increase its efforts to coordinate and cooperate with other United Nations organizations, in particular with its sister organizations in Rome.

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Social and human rights questions: advancement of women

Results of the thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Note by the Secretary-General

Summary

The present note sets out the results, including decisions taken, of the thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which were held in New York from 15 January to 2 February 2007 and from 14 May to 1 June 2007, respectively. The Committee's annual report, covering its thirty-seventh, thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth sessions (A/62/38), will be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session.

* E/2007/100 and Corr.1.

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I. Introduction

1. Article 21, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women states that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women shall, through the Economic and Social Council, report annually to the General Assembly on its activities. The report of the Committee on its thirty-seventh, thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth sessions will be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session (A/62/38).

II. Results of the Committee's thirty-seventh session

2. The Committee held its thirty-seventh session from 15 January to 2 February 2007. The results of that session are contained in the note by the Secretary-General submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-first session (E/CN.6/2007/CRP.1).

III. Results of the Committee's thirty-eighth session

3. The Committee held its thirty-eighth session from 14 May to 1 June 2007. At that session, the Committee adopted one decision and took action on items 5, 6 and 7 of its agenda (CEDAW/C/2007/II/1).

4. On 1 June 2007, the closing date of the thirty-eighth session, there were 185 States parties to the Convention. A total of 87 States parties had ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol and 49 States had accepted the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.

A. Reports considered by the Committee

5. The Committee considered the reports of eight States parties submitted under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. All reports were initial reports, or combined initial and periodic reports, namely those of Mauritania (initial), Mozambique (combined initial and second periodic), Niger (combined initial and second periodic), Pakistan (combined initial, second and third periodic), Serbia (initial), Sierra Leone (combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic), Syrian Arab Republic (initial) and Vanuatu (combined initial, second and third periodic). The delegations of several reporting States were headed by Ministers and included representatives with specialized technical expertise. The reports, the Committee's lists of issues and questions, the replies of States parties and their introductory statements (where available electronically) are posted on the website of the Division for the Advancement of Women (http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/38sess.htm).

6. The Committee adopted concluding comments with regard to each of the reporting States which are also available on the above-mentioned website.

B. Decision

7. The Committee will adopt a decision pertaining to the extension of its meeting time at its thirty-ninth session (23 July-10 August 2007) and will bring it to the attention of States parties. A statement of programme budget implications pertaining to the decision will be before the Committee at its thirty-ninth session.

C. Implementation of article 21 of the Convention

8. Members of the Committee's working group for a general recommendation on article 2 of the Convention provided an update on the status of its work.

9. The Committee discussed a revised draft of a general recommendation on women migrant workers, submitted by its working group, and agreed on the next steps for its further revision.

D. Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee

Informal meeting with States parties to the Convention

10. The Committee decided to invite States parties to an informal meeting at its thirty-ninth session, scheduled to take place from 23 July to 10 August. The meeting would take place in the third week of the session and would provide an opportunity to update States parties on the Committee's request for extension of meeting time; its efforts to encourage States parties to submit long-overdue initial reports; its work in parallel chambers; and other matters pertaining to its responsibilities under the Convention and the Optional Protocol.

Request for long overdue initial reports

11. The Committee reviewed the status of submission of reports by States parties (CEDAW/C/2007/I/2), as well as steps taken at its thirty-seventh session aimed at encouraging States parties to submit long overdue reports. The Committee proceeded in accordance with its decisions 29/I and 31/III (i), taking into consideration its previous experience in inviting two States parties, Cape Verde and Saint Lucia, to submit all their overdue reports as combined reports. The Committee noted that at its thirty-seventh session, it had requested four States parties that are more than 20 years overdue in submitting their initial report under article 18 of the Convention, i.e. Dominica, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti and Liberia, to submit all their overdue reports as combined reports by March 2008, for consideration at its forty-third session in 2009. The Committee agreed to request four more States parties with long overdue reports, i.e. Bahamas, the Central African Republic, Grenada and Seychelles, to submit their initial and all other outstanding periodic reports in a combined report by the end of 2008, for consideration by the Committee in early 2010. As a measure of last resort, failing the receipt of the reports within the suggested time frame, the Committee will proceed with consideration of the implementation of the Convention in the four States parties in the absence of a report. The Committee also decided to send reminder letters to the following States parties: Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti and Tuvalu.

Harmonized reporting guidelines

12. The Committee continued to review its own reporting guidelines in the light of the harmonized guidelines on reporting under international human rights treaties (HRI/MC/2006/3). Based on the proposal of its working group, the Committee agreed to continue its work on the revisions at its thirty-ninth session with a view to their adoption.

United Nations reform

13. The Committee was briefed by, and engaged in an interactive dialogue with the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, on matters pertaining to United Nations reform, in particular proposals regarding a new gender equality architecture.

Other matters

Twenty-fifth anniversary of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

14. The Committee agreed to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Committee on 23 July 2007, at the opening meeting of its thirty-ninth session. It extended an invitation to the Secretary-General to address the Committee on that occasion, as well as to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women and a representative of a non-governmental organization.

E. Activities of the Committee under the Optional Protocol to the Convention

15. The Committee continued to consider matters arising in conjunction with its work under the Optional Protocol, and adopted decision 10/2005, N.F.S. v. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It appointed two ad hoc rapporteurs for follow-up to its views in A.S. v. Hungary, 4/2004.

16. The Committee's Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol held an informal meeting on 4 and 5 June 2007 and registered communication 15/2007.

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Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Economic and Social Council
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Items 4, 6, 7 (f), 8, 13 and 14 of the provisional agenda**

The role of the United Nations system in promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all

Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

Coordination, programme and other questions: Information and Communication Technologies Task Force

Implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B, 57/270 B and 60/265

Economic and environmental questions

Social and human rights questions

Role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits, in the light of General Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B, 57/270 B and 60/265

Report of the Secretary-General

* A/62/50.
** E/2007/100 and Corr.1.

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Summary

The present report provides an overview of the major areas of progress and continuing challenges in the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits at the global, regional and country level and proposes steps that could be taken to address them. It highlights, in particular, the opportunities that the new functions of the Economic and Social Council, notably the annual ministerial review, the biennial Development Cooperation Forum and the specific event of the General Assembly on development, provide for advancing the integrated and coordinated follow-up of conferences.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/44, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B, 57/270 B and 60/265, and to paragraph 39 of General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, in which the Assembly requested the inclusion of an item entitled "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields" in its agenda. The report serves as documentation for both the Council and the Assembly under the relevant agenda items.

2. Over the past 15 years, the major United Nations conferences and summits have together resulted in the emergence of a comprehensive shared vision of development. They have generated global consensus and shaped the policy orientation of Member States and of the United Nations system in a wide range of development areas, encompassing poverty eradication, sustainable development, financing for development, employment and decent work, social inclusion, food security, health, education, human rights, women and gender equality, children, population and human settlements.

3. By laying foundations for the Millennium Development Goals, as a distillation of some key elements of the outcomes of the conferences of the 1990s, the Millennium Summit provided a compelling platform to address the needs of the world's poor. At the 2005 World Summit, Heads of State and Government embraced the broader concept of the internationally agreed development goals, which fully reaffirmed the Millennium Development Goals but was intended, at the same time, to give new impetus to the broader set of commitments agreed at the major United Nations conferences and summits. Implied in this broader concept is the recognition that the Millennium Development Goals do not encompass all of the issues and goals that lead to durable economic and social progress and sustainable development, and that the drive for the Millennium Development Goals itself will gain force and be sustained if approached in the broader context of the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits.

4. Those conferences of the 1990s, and the conferences that followed them in Johannesburg and Monterrey, have in turn served to enrich and to give new impetus and urgency to the call for the integrated follow-up to conferences, first voiced by the Economic and Social Council over 10 years ago. Through this call, reiterated and amplified over the years, the Council has sought to foster a comprehensive United Nations development agenda — a holistic approach to economic and social development that takes into account interrelationships and is aimed at advancing synergies among the different goals of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the Millennium Development Goals. At the institutional level, the call is for enhanced system-wide coherence that serves to make the diversity and complexity of the United Nations system a source of strength so that United Nations organizations, both normative and operational, acting alone or in concert, can apply their varied strength to the common purpose of bringing the shared vision of the United Nations development agenda to fruition.

II. Overview of progress of the United Nations system in the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits

A. Global review

5. Each of the global conferences has focused on a specific aspect of development, relevant to the achievement of the United Nations development agenda. Each conference has generated its own follow-up mechanism with its own constituency, driving implementation forward, and each conference follow-up mechanism is contributing to the overall United Nations development agenda. At the same time, there are many issues that are closely interrelated and touch upon several goals of the United Nations conferences and summits. Given the strong linkages among them, those cross-cutting issues need to be pursued through multifaceted policies and actions with the recognition that outcomes in one sector are dependent on outcomes in others. Against this background, the Economic and Social Council has promoted an integrated and coordinated follow-up aimed at enhancing coherence among the various conference follow-up processes while at the same time allowing them to maintain their distinct identities.

6. The individual conference follow-up mechanisms and processes undertaken by various functional commissions continue to contribute to different elements of the United Nations development agenda. By focusing on the follow-up of their respective conferences, together they contribute to the whole spectrum of the agenda, covering economic, social and environmental aspects. Among the highlights of the conference follow-up processes are those described below.

7. In the area of economic development, functional commissions stressed that making employment a central objective of national and international policies and adopting a comprehensive approach, at both the national and the international levels, was imperative for reaching the internationally agreed development goals, particularly the goal of reducing poverty. It was also stressed that the social orientation of employment and poverty-reduction strategies should be strengthened to target marginalized and vulnerable groups. The importance of industrial development and energy in achieving the goals was also emphasized. The contribution of statistical capacity and information and communications technology to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, which was relevant to all the conferences, was recognized. In the context of the midterm review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, the General Assembly emphasized that least developed countries were lagging behind in the implementation of the United Nations development agenda and that efforts need to be stepped up.

8. In the social area, the importance of the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child was underscored. The significance of health-related issues to women's empowerment and gender equality was also emphasized, including for the girl child. With regard to HIV/AIDS, the need for a coordinated approach between plans and strategies for addressing HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health and national development, including poverty eradication strategies, was noted. It was also highlighted that the changing age structures of

populations, in both developing and developed countries, will fundamentally reshape the context within which the United Nations development agenda will need to be achieved. Changing age structures provide the opportunity to reap a "demographic dividend" if enough jobs can be created for the expanding workforce. At the same time, it was noted that the growing number of people reaching old age with minimal literacy and numeracy poses the threat of an increase in old-age poverty. To address that threat, the mainstreaming of the issue of ageing into national and international agendas, as well as capacity-building at the national level, was called for. The concerns of other vulnerable groups, such as indigenous peoples, youth and people with disabilities, the world drug problem and the use of crime prevention and criminal justice to respond to urban crime and to combat sexual exploitation of children were also addressed.

9. In the area of environment, relevant functional commissions addressed the impacts of climate change and air pollution on the overall achievement of the United Nations development agenda. There was a widely shared recognition that climate change, in addition to being an environmental concern, was a global sustainable development challenge with strong social and economic dimensions and that the international community should take urgent action. The important role of sustainable forest management, in particular for vulnerable groups, in achieving the internationally agreed development goals was noted. The importance attached to sustainable forest management was also manifested by the adoption of a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests at the seventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

10. In addition to advancing the implementation of their respective conference outcomes, functional commissions also contributed directly to the annual ministerial review, a new central mechanism to promote the integrated and coordinated follow-up of conferences, mandated by Heads of State and Government at the 2005 World Summit. In 2007, the Economic and Social Council will hold its first annual ministerial review, on the theme "Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development". The Commission on the Status of Women submitted a paper on that theme to the Council highlighting recommendations for action to eliminate poverty and hunger based on previously agreed documents of the Commission. The Committee for Development Policy focused on the international partnership for effective poverty reduction and recommended that the Council, through the annual ministerial review, monitor poverty reduction strategy papers and national development strategies to identify the most effective modality of international partnership for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Other commissions that were not able to specifically address the theme, given the lateness of the decision by the Council, made contributions in the context of their own focus and their natural link to poverty eradication. Their contributions, covering a whole array of development challenges, highlight the strong linkages between the conference goals and the need for all-encompassing development strategies to address the multiple dimensions of poverty.

11. The foregoing account, while selective, shows that the global conference follow-up mechanisms have framed their work around the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. It also illustrates that many of them have adopted a comprehensive approach to addressing the follow-up of their individual conferences, recognizing that the different goals and targets agreed at the major United Nations conferences and summits can be achieved

only if they are pursued together. The remaining challenge is to bring the results of the various conference follow-up processes together in a systematic way.

Implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

12. Implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society are being undertaken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/252. The traditional task of harmonizing the work of diverse United Nations entities in the implementation of a summit outcome presents unique challenges in the case of the World Summit on the Information Society, since implementation and follow-up require a broad engagement of non-governmental stakeholders and partners.

13. While defining parameters of the follow-up in response to those challenges, the Council, in its resolution 2006/46, decided that it would monitor the system-wide follow-up to the Summit outcomes in the context of its annual consideration of the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits in its coordination segment, on the basis of the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and drawing upon other relevant inputs.

14. There are three interacting streams of implementation and follow-up activities: the intergovernmental, United Nations system and multi-stakeholder streams. The intergovernmental process (Economic and Social Council and Commission on Science and Technology for Development) performs follow-up review and assessment, with contributions from non-governmental stakeholders channelled through the multi-stakeholder Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies and Development (see annex). During its 2007 annual session, which focused on the theme "Promoting the building of a people-centred, development-oriented and inclusive information society: progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society", the Commission assessed global and regional progress in the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society. United Nations entities, including the regional commissions, in accordance with their respective mandates, engage in implementation, in cooperation with diverse non-governmental stakeholders. Coordination among the United Nations system entities is undertaken by the United Nations Group on the Information Society, created by the Secretary-General in accordance with the request of the Summit. Also, in accordance with the recommendations contained in the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, cooperation, exchange of information and promotion of partnership among diverse stakeholders are undertaken through a system of action-line facilitators. In May 2007, in the framework of the World Summit on the Information Society Week, organized in connection with World Information Society Day, a series of meetings of action-line facilitators was held in Geneva. Furthermore, the World Summit on the Information Society requested the Secretary-General to convene the Internet Governance Forum, a new forum for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue, to discuss, inter alia, public policy issues related to Internet governance in order to foster the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the Internet. The inaugural meeting, entitled "Internet governance for development", was held in Athens from 30 October to 2 November 2006, and the second meeting is scheduled to be held in Rio de Janeiro from 12 to 15 November 2007. Consultations are under

way to start a process towards enhanced cooperation among all relevant stakeholders with regard to Internet governance, as requested by the Summit.

Update of progress made in the implementation of key provisions of relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council

15. The progress in advancing an integrated approach in the substantive work of the United Nations has been complemented by several procedural improvements in the follow-up of conferences, called for in resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B, 57/270 B and 60/265. With regard to methods of work, the General Assembly (resolution 57/270 B), and subsequently the Economic and Social Council (resolution 2006/44), requested functional commissions to examine their methods of work. By June 2007, all functional commissions had reported the completion of the review of their methods of work. All of them had put in place a mechanism to ensure the continuity of the Bureau, had significantly improved cooperation with the Council and had organized panels and side events during their sessions with multi-stakeholder participation.

16. Over the last year, some progress has also been made in further strengthening the ties among functional commissions. A new element of interaction was the meeting of the chairpersons of the functional commissions with the Bureau of the Council. That meeting, held on 15 January 2007 in New York, replaced the individual joint bureau meetings. All chairpersons of the functional commissions, as well as of the United Nations Forum on Forest and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, participated in the meeting, some via video link. In addition, there were interactions between individual functional commissions. For example, the Statistical Commission held a joint panel discussion with the Commission on the Status of Women on the latter's theme "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child". The panel discussion was very well received. Functional commissions also continued to cooperate with relevant United Nations funds and programmes, specialized agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions, allowing them to tap into the lessons learned and examples of good practices from the field.

B. Regional perspectives

Supporting national development strategies

17. Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, remains a key challenge in all regions of the world. In an interdependent world, the importance of regional approaches in achieving the United Nations development agenda is increasingly recognized. This has resulted in the emergence of new regional organizations with a variety of approaches to the pursuit of the development agenda. Against this backdrop, in its resolution 2006/44 the Economic and Social Council invited the regional commissions to cooperate with regional organizations and other regional processes, as appropriate, in pursuing the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences. Regional commissions have responded to that call by assisting their respective regions in the pursuit of their goals and objectives through a common approach. They have increasingly focused on helping regions identify priority areas for action and have realigned their programmes accordingly.

18. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), after undergoing a repositioning exercise over recent months, has further realigned its work programme around the themes of the major global conferences and the priorities of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. To better help Member States translate normative outcomes and agreements into operational guidance, it also reformed and strengthened its technical cooperation programme. ECA also strengthened its cooperation with other regional organizations. A strategic compact with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was also made to scale up capacity development in support of meeting the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. To strengthen collaboration at the subregional level, ECA is empowering its subregional offices to play an enhanced role in the delivery of the Commission's work programme. In addition, ECA has made efforts to revitalize the annual regional consultation mechanism, chaired by the Executive Secretary, which is meant to strengthen United Nations-system coordination.

19. While the overall performance of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) region has been impressive, the region also includes some subregions where least developed countries and countries with economies in transition struggle to make headway. To better assist those countries, ESCAP, in collaboration with UNDP and the Asian Development Bank, has organized subregional Millennium Development Goals forums in the Asia and the Pacific region to develop subregional plans of action to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. ESCAP also undertook analytical studies[1] to identify regional policy actions needed. Other activities in follow-up of specific conferences include a series of regional policy forums.

20. The work of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) was guided by the Millennium Declaration and the Arab Declaration on the pursuit of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, adopted by the League of Arab States on 30 June 2005, as well as the major United Nations conferences and summits. With regard to the Millennium Development Goals, ESCWA, in close collaboration with regional offices of United Nations specialized agencies and the League of Arab States, is preparing the 2007 United Nations Millennium Development Goal report that covers all 22 Arab countries. Activities in follow-up to specific conferences included assisting the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment; promoting sustainable water and energy management in collaboration with the other agencies; integrating HIV/AIDS in planning and programming for social equity in the Arab region, in collaboration with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, UNDP, the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); promoting national machineries for women and full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and assisting in implementing the World Summit on the Information Society outcomes.

21. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) also assisted Member States in the follow-up of the global conferences. With regard to the Millennium Development Goals, ECLAC coordinated the preparation of the

[1] See, e.g., the ESCAP publication *Achieving the MDGs in Asia: A Case for More Aid?* and the Asian Development Bank publication *The Millennium Development Goals: Progress in Asia and the Pacific, 2006*.

annual regional inter-agency report on the Millennium Development Goals, which serves as a catalyst for the analytical and normative work undertaken in support of the operational activities of the United Nations system at the regional level. It also convenes the regional inter-agency coordination meeting. Activities to follow up specific conferences include a project on hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity undertaken in cooperation with the World Food Programme; the establishment of a regional coordinating mechanism to address the sustainable development of small island developing States with the engagement of 11 regional organizations; serving as a technical secretariat of the Regional Plan of Action for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean; holding the tenth ECLAC regional conference on women in follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action; and establishing an Internet portal that provides access to a database of gender statistics.

22. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) has also focused on the follow-up of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. It has, inter alia, provided a regional platform for exchanging good practices in the context of the follow-up to the Beijing process. Recognizing that the creation of an enabling environment cannot be separated from political stability, the 2007 annual session discussed the threats posed by frozen conflicts (in the Balkans, the Caucasus and, to a lesser degree, Central Asia) on economic developments and how this could be addressed. The session also discussed how ECE can further its collaboration with the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia and the international financial institutions to successfully address these challenges and to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

C. Strengthening the link between the global policy debate and national activities

Making headway in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the United Nations development agenda at the country level

23. To have real impact on peoples' livelihoods, progress made in the United Nations system's conceptual and standard-setting work aimed at advancing the integrated and coordinated follow-up must be translated into progress at the country level. This requires efforts both by Member States and by the United Nations system itself. The challenge for developing countries is to firmly anchor, with the support of the international community, the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, in their national development strategies.[2] The challenge before United Nations system organizations is to work together in a more integrated manner to ensure that the different agencies, including non-resident agencies, can bring their comparative advantages to bear in the context of the work as a United Nations country team.

24. The 2005 World Summit marked an important step forward in promoting the integrated and coordinated follow-up of conferences at the country level. By calling upon countries to develop and begin to implement comprehensive national

[2] See General Assembly resolutions 60/1 and 60/265.

development strategies to achieve their national development priorities as well as the internationally agreed development goals, Member States committed themselves at the highest level to use the Millennium Development Goals and the goals and strategies agreed at the major United Nations conferences and summits as the foundation of their national development strategies. An increasing number of United Nations country teams have been able to work with national partners to link Millennium Development Goals, poverty reduction strategy papers, common country assessments and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs). A 2007 United Nations Development Group (UNDG) study on the effectiveness of United Nations Country Teams in advancing the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goal agenda in national development plans and poverty reduction strategy paper processes, to be published in July 2007, is reviewing the effectiveness of eight country teams in assisting countries in mainstreaming the Millennium Development Goals and internationally agreed development goals into their national development strategies.

25. Reports of individual United Nations specialized agencies and funds and programmes also point to progress in helping countries to firmly anchor specific Millennium Development Goals in national development strategies. For example, UNDP, in coordination with other agencies, worked with over 40 countries in Africa and Asia to support Governments making Millennium Development Goal needs assessments and using that analysis to prepare Millennium Development Goal-based strategies. UNFPA reported increased attention to reproductive health issues in national development frameworks during the period 2004-2006. In the area of gender-responsive budgeting, the United Nations Development Fund for Women supported new or strengthened networks to advocate for and monitor progress on gender-responsive budgeting and Millennium Development Goals, poverty reduction strategy papers and national development strategies in 15 countries.

26. In accordance with UNDG guidance, common country assessments and UNDAFs, in support of national development strategies, are becoming more strategically focused in helping countries progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and in promoting comprehensive approaches to poverty eradication that go beyond the income dimension. However, with their strong focus on the Millennium Development Goals, UNDAFs often remain predominantly focused on social development issues. Recent revisions of the common country assessment and UNDAF guidelines try to address this issue by underlining the importance of including the broader international development agenda of the internationally agreed development goals as a basis for analysis and planning at the country level. Further efforts will need to be made to more systematically tap into the extensive knowledge and expertise of non-resident agencies, in particular on issues related to sustained economic growth and productive sectors included in the broader United Nations development agenda, such as decent work, employment, rural and agricultural development, industrial development and the interface between trade and development, and/or international treaty obligations.

27. A main challenge for the United Nations system in better promoting an integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences is to find a way of better harnessing the different capacities and comparative advantages of each organization. To that end, over recent years the organizations of the United Nations system have adopted several concrete measures. The introduction of common country assessments and UNDAFs is one example of such efforts. The 164 common country

Nations system works", with the aim of promoting coherence and synergies in the pursuit of the United Nations development agenda. In 2007, one example of a concrete contribution to enhancing policy coherence around a shared and common objective is the development of a "toolkit" for mainstreaming employment and decent work objectives in the policies and activities of the United Nations organizations. The toolkit helps the United Nations system organizations to determine how their strategies, policies, and programmes are interlinked with employment and decent work outcomes and how they may optimize employment outcomes at all levels. CEB also supported the United Nations system's efforts to better work together at the country level in the context of the "One United Nations" pilots.

31. The Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs has served as a platform for strategic analysis and promoting coherent approaches on economic and social issues. While oriented towards a broad range of policy issues, the activities of the Executive Committee are particularly essential for achieving the United Nations development goals. Members of the Executive Committee, which include primarily United Nations Secretariat entities, work closely together in supporting meetings of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, notably on conference follow-up. In follow-up to the 2005 World Summit, the Executive Committee adopted as one of its key priorities support for the Development Cooperation Forum and annual ministerial reviews of the Economic and Social Council. All members have started to gear their work in support of those functions of the Council.

32. UNDG has played a major role in advancing the implementation of the conference outcomes at the country level. In addition to measures outlined in section II.C above, UNDG facilitated an exchange of lessons learned among United Nations country teams. To ensure that good practices become global practices, UNDG promoted the development of several web-based tools. Examples include the UNDG Coordination Practice Network, which serves as a global electronic network for United Nations staff on coordination issues. Another example is the establishment of a UNDG inter-agency policy adviser network, which, once fully operational in 2007, will be able to provide virtual substantive policy and operational advice to country teams on Millennium Development Goal-based strategies.

E. Engaging the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization in the implementation of the United Nations development agenda

33. With the major United Nations conferences and summits, an unprecedented consensus based on the internationally agreed development goals has emerged. The United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and all parts of the international system have come together behind the same set of development commitments and stand ready to be held accountable for them. This unique opportunity must now be seized to join forces and put this shared set of development commitments into practice.

34. This requires strengthened cooperation among the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization. The Economic and Social

Council meets with the intergovernmental bodies of the Bretton Woods institutions in the context of its annual special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and UNCTAD and holds a high-level dialogue with the financial and trade organizations in the context of the high-level segment of the Council. In addition, the General Assembly assesses progress towards the implementation of the International Conference on Financing for Development during a biennial high-level dialogue of the General Assembly. While these meetings have continued to attract high-level participation, which attests to the importance attached to them, there has been a sentiment among institutional stakeholders that the meetings have largely remained an exercise in exchange of information on activities related to the follow-up of the Monterrey Conference, rather than a dialogue resulting in the development of a common agenda for joint action outlining concrete steps on how to move ahead together in the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. Efforts to make the meeting more interactive and focused will need to continue.

35. Complementing those existing forums, the 2005 World Summit opened up several new possibilities for enhanced cooperation. At the global level, the Development Cooperation Forum and the annual ministerial review provide important new opportunities to strengthen cooperation among the four institutions. At the country level, where the Bretton Woods institutions have played an important role in assisting countries in the preparation of poverty reduction strategy papers, the World Summit's focus on the adoption of country-owned national development strategies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals provides scope for increased cooperation. To help countries prepare and implement Millennium Development Goal-based national development strategies, a strong operational partnership between UNDP and the World Bank, aimed at helping to identify and solve some of the critical practical bottlenecks in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and promote the scaling up of good practices, is currently under discussion. To demonstrate the strong commitment to work more closely together and to eliminate duplication, cooperation at the highest level between the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization should also be further strengthened. One possibility would be to hold regular meetings that could serve several functions. First, as an immediate task they could help identify common strategic priorities and a shared vision for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha in the second half of 2008,[5] and how to best use upcoming events as stepping stones for that review. Second, they can provide an opportunity to formulate a common vision on the future work of those organizations in implementing the United Nations development agenda.

III. Making the conference follow-up process more efficient and accountable

36. While some progress has been made at the global, regional and country levels in realigning individual conference follow-up processes with the United Nations development agenda, much more needs to be done to reap the benefits of potential

[5] See General Assembly resolution 61/191.

synergies between the different follow-up processes. The present section sets out proposals on how the new Economic and Social Council functions, notably the annual ministerial review and the Development cooperation Forum, and the specific meeting of the General Assembly on development, mandated in its resolution 60/265, could help the United Nations system to better capitalize on the synergies of the different follow-up processes.

A. Enhancing the efficiency of the conference follow-up process

37. The Economic and Social Council, as a central mechanism for system-wide coordination in the economic and social and related fields, can help generate synergies by providing an umbrella for the different follow-up processes.[6] The two new functions of the Council, the annual ministerial review and the Development Cooperation Forum, provide important opportunities in this regard. In particular, an annual ministerial review under the auspices of the Council can serve as the new central mechanism for monitoring progress in the implementation of the agenda, an umbrella review that provides a comprehensive and integrated approach to the different follow-up processes. While the Council will need to take a number of steps to realize this potential of the annual ministerial review, one important and urgent step is to ensure that the Council identifies its themes and priorities in a clear and timely manner.

38. A key element is the adoption of a multi-year programme of work for the annual ministerial review, based on a cross-sectoral approach, focusing on thematic issues common to the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields, as mandated in General Assembly resolution 61/16. To provide sufficient predictability, the initial multi-year programme of work would ideally cover at least three years. In 2007, the vital importance of adopting a multi-year programme of work has become most apparent in the case of the Committee for Development Policy, whose efforts to realign its work programme with the themes of the Economic and Social Council high-level segment have suffered from the lateness of the Council's decision on the themes. This example illustrates that the predictability of the work of the Council is one of the essential elements for ensuring the United Nations system's support for its work.

39. Once a multi-year programme of work is in place, each functional commission would be requested to contribute to the annual ministerial review. In the short run, the Council could ask functional commissions working on conference follow-up processes to devote part of their sessions to an analysis of the obstacles and challenges, as well as lessons learned and innovative practices, in relation to the theme of the annual ministerial review. In the medium term, as the functional commissions are adopting or reviewing existing work programmes, the Council could request functional commissions to include the annual ministerial review theme as one of the themes for their annual sessions.

40. Over time, as the new work programmes of the functional commissions are coming into effect, functional commissions would start to address the cross-sectoral annual ministerial review theme from their own perspective, alongside their own conference-specific topics. For instance, if the Economic and Social Council were to

[6] See General Assembly resolution 60/265, para. 49.

choose the cross-sectoral theme of science and technology for development, the Commission on the Status of Women would examine the role of science and technology in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, while the Commission on Sustainable Development would address the importance of science and technology in implementing Agenda 21, the further implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. This would allow each of the functional commissions to bring its specific perspective to bear on the annual ministerial review theme, which in turn would enable the Council to formulate comprehensive cross-sectoral policy recommendations that take into account the interrelatedness of the different United Nations conferences and their respective goals. By tackling a different cross-sectoral theme each year, the annual ministerial review would, over time, provide a truly holistic and integrated follow-up of all aspects covered by the United Nations development agenda.

41. The focus on a common cross-sectoral annual ministerial review theme in addition to the functional commissions' specific focus would also give new impetus to efforts to strengthen cooperation between the functional commissions. At present, each functional commission has its own constituency — governmental and non-governmental — which rarely engages in an exchange of ideas with constituencies of other functional commissions. To actively promote cooperation among the functional commissions and their various constituencies, the Council could decide to devote part of the meetings of the Bureau of the Council with the chairs of the functional commissions at the beginning of each year to the identification of concrete measures to foster cooperation, in particular on the common annual ministerial review theme. Such measures could include enhanced use of joint panel events and joint informal working groups.

42. A common thematic focus should also help in enhancing cooperation between the functional commissions and the regional commissions to more systematically integrate lessons learned at the regional level.[7] As illustrated in section II.B above, regional commissions have arranged their work around the Millennium Development Goals and internationally agreed development goals, and much of their work is directly linked to the individual follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits. Hence, there is much potential for cooperation. At the moment, the level of cooperation between the functional commissions and the regional commissions varies significantly. In particular, the Commission on Sustainable Development, with its biennial regional implementation forums, has established strong links with the regional commissions. However, rolling out the scheme of the Commission on Sustainable Development to the other functional commissions would overburden the limited capacity of regional commissions. As an alternative, annual ministerial review regional implementation meetings could be held. Whenever possible, such meetings could be held back to back with the sessions of the regional commissions. The meetings would review the progress in the implementation of the United Nations development agenda at the regional level and address the annual ministerial review theme. By reviewing regional-level progress in the follow-up to various United Nations conferences, the regional implementation meetings would help to strengthen cooperation between the functional commissions and regional commissions, as called for in Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/44. At the same time such meetings would contribute

[7] See Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/44.

to the annual ministerial review, as called for in General Assembly resolution 61/16 and Economic and Social Council decision 2006/274.

43. The Development Cooperation Forum, to be convened by the Council, provides another new opportunity to create synergies between the follow-up processes. Anchored in the global partnership for development set out in the Monterrey Consensus, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Millennium Declaration and reaffirmed at the 2005 World Summit, it is expected to bring together all the relevant actors to engage in a dialogue on key policy issues affecting the quality and impact of development cooperation. One of the Forum's goals is to make recommendations on measures and policy options to enhance coherence and effectiveness and to promote development cooperation for the realization of the internationally agreed development goals. The Forum is thus the opportunity to review the extent to which development cooperation in general is supportive of the internationally agreed development goals. While the Forum has a distinct identity, its outcome will also contribute to the Follow-Up International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Doha in 2008. Since the Forum is aimed at broad-based participation, preparations should be held at the regional and global levels to facilitate the participation of a diverse group of stakeholders. To bring a regional focus to the Forum's work, preparatory meetings could be convened by the regional commissions back to back with their respective sessions.

44. In addition to the annual ministerial review and the Development Cooperation Forum, the General Assembly, in paragraph 56 of its resolution 60/265, decided to hold a specific meeting focused on development. The meeting should be seen in relation to efforts of Member States to strengthen the role of the Assembly as the highest intergovernmental mechanism for the formulation and appraisal of policy matters on development. In 2006, the specific meeting focused on development was held on 6 December 2006, in New York. In the future, the meeting could serve as the pinnacle of the United Nations system's efforts in advancing the implementation of the United Nations development agenda. The meeting should build on the outcome of the annual ministerial review, which will provide a comprehensive overview of the implementation process. The meeting should be seen as an occasion for Member States, the United Nations system and other major stakeholders — both governmental and non-governmental — to announce concrete steps and new initiatives to address the constraints and challenges identified during the annual ministerial review.

B. Enhancing the accountability of the conference follow-up process

45. Making the conference follow-up process more accountable will require a rigorous follow-up of decisions taken by the Economic and Social Council. At the moment, the coordination segment reviews the measures taken by the United Nations system to implement the ministerial declaration by taking up the high-level theme of the previous year, as envisaged in paragraph 43 of General Assembly resolution 57/270 B. In the future, such a link should be maintained between the high-level segment, in particular its annual ministerial review, and the coordination segment. Through such an approach the annual ministerial review multi-year programme of work would help in determining the multi-year programme of work of the coordination segment. Ensuring accountability will require a coordination

segment that provides a comprehensive overview of the United Nations system's efforts in advancing the implementation of the recommendations of the high-level segment related to the follow-up of the United Nations conferences, and in particular of the annual ministerial review at the global, regional and country levels, based on recent and reliable data. Since several innovations have been successfully introduced in the recent past to ensure a comprehensive overview of the United Nations system work to follow-up Economic and Social Council decisions adopted at the coordination segment, the key features of that segment should be maintained. Efforts should instead focus on facilitating a candid discussion by using innovative meeting formats and the inclusion of recent and reliable data in coordination-segment reports.

Possible features of future coordination segment

Panel on United Nations system follow-up to the ministerial declaration, in particular the annual ministerial review, with relevant executive heads of United Nations funds and specialized agencies and regional commissions to:

- Report on CEB initiatives, such as the development of a system-wide toolkit, to implement the annual ministerial review ministerial declaration
- Present the contributions of relevant technical agencies whose work is vital to development activities, but has not always received the necessary political attention at the intergovernmental level
- Report on action taken by the regional commissions by themselves or in cooperation with other regional actors to implement the ministerial declaration

Panel discussion involving the Council and the chairs of functional commissions and other relevant subsidiary bodies to:

- Report on action taken to follow up the ministerial declaration of the previous year
- Discuss actions planned to implement the newly adopted Ministerial declaration
- Discuss other issues that need the Council's urgent attention

Roundtable-discussion with countries that volunteered for the annual ministerial review in the previous year to:

- Present actions taken by UNDG at country level to address the challenges and obstacles identified during the annual ministerial review
- Present actions taken by developing and developed countries

Review of the reporting mechanism

46. Delegations have found it difficult to cope with the volume of reports submitted to the Economic and Social Council. The large number of documents that need to be considered has had a negative impact on the Council's ability to provide its subsidiary bodies with clear policy guidance, as called for in General Assembly resolutions 60/265 and 61/16. There is thus an urgent need for a thorough review of the reporting mechanism, particularly reporting by the Council's subsidiary bodies. To that end, the Council should explore how to make the information presented in the reports to the Council more easily accessible.

47. The functional commissions and other relevant subsidiary bodies of the Council mandated with the follow-up of specific conferences or summits in the economic, social and related field should prepare short inputs, of no more than three pages, which should provide an overview of actions taken and key findings, including examples of good practice as well as a set of policy recommendations on the annual ministerial review theme from their perspective. This could follow the current practice of the Commission on the Status of Women, which has been submitting to the Council a paper on the theme of its high-level segment. The input could be included as a separate section in their reports to the Council on their work. The Council should invite other follow-up mechanisms to provide a similar input to the annual ministerial review discussions.

48. Similarly, regional commissions should provide a short strategic summary of their key findings and recommendations of the annual ministerial review regional meetings. The input of the regional commissions could follow the format of the input provided by regional commissions to the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.[8] The joint regional commission input to the 2007 session could serve as a model both in terms of the preparation of the input and in terms of the presentation. The contribution could be submitted as part of the annual report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields" submitted to the Council.

49. To ensure that the work of the subsidiary and expert bodies of the Economic and Social Council has real impact, whenever possible the contributions should be submitted to the Council well in advance of the start of the negotiations on its ministerial declaration and its substantive session.

50. Efforts are also needed to make the annual report of the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly more substantive. As a first step, if the specific event of the General Assembly on development is to serve as the pinnacle of the United Nations system's efforts in advancing the implementation of the United Nations development agenda, the Council could use a section of its annual report to the Assembly to highlight key messages that have emerged from the annual ministerial review and the work of the Council's subsidiary bodies on the review.

Strengthening the evaluation and monitoring capacity of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies

51. Enhancing the accountability of the review process will require an examination of the existing conference follow-up monitoring system. This was also

[8] See http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd15/documents/regional_commissions.pdf.

recognized in resolution 60/265, in which the General Assembly called for a strengthening of monitoring of the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Steps will need to be taken at all levels. At the global level, in line with paragraph 54 of resolution 60/265, the Statistical Commission should strive to finalize indicators to assess the implementation of commitments. There is also an urgent need to raise capacity in data collection and monitoring of implementation at the national level. Each functional commission could address the issues of data collection, analysis and dissemination of information specific to the work of individual functional commissions. As a first step, to address challenges and obstacles in collecting quality data, the Economic and Social Council could invite functional commissions, in cooperation with the Statistical Commission, to organize a series of round-table discussions on strengthening statistical capacity for data relevant to their follow-up activities. The results of those round-table discussions, as appropriate, could be submitted to the Statistical Commission for its consideration. At the regional level, regional commissions play a key role in facilitating data reporting from the national to the international system, in analysing and disseminating available data and in national statistical capacity-building. Functional commissions should tap into this knowledge when taking up the issue. At the country level, United Nations country teams, with the support of the regional commissions, have continued to promote the inclusion of measurable results, which are in line with regional and global requirements for Millennium Development Goal monitoring, in the national development strategies. The Council should encourage the country teams to continue their efforts to collaborate closely with other United Nations institutions, in particular regional commissions and other non-resident institutions with expertise on specific Millennium Development Goal and internationally agreed development goal indicators, and to ensure that national statistical systems are fully involved in the process of data preparation and analysis of the indicators.

Enhancing the effectiveness of the conference follow-up process by strengthening the involvement of civil society and the private sector

52. The world conferences have resulted in an unprecedented rise in the involvement of civil society and business representatives in the work of the United Nations. Advocacy and interest groups, business and industry, research and academic institutions and other relevant stakeholders have played an important role in advancing the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. Yet, as has been the case in the intergovernmental processes, there has been a lack of cross-fertilization among the different constituencies.

53. By bringing the different follow-up processes together, the annual ministerial review, the Development Cooperation Forum and the specific event of the General Assembly on development provide important new opportunities to inject new dynamism into the follow-up of the conferences, by promoting greater interaction among the different constituencies. The Innovation Fair, held in parallel to the annual ministerial review, provides the opportunity for civil society and the private sector to showcase innovative practices. It should evolve into a "matchmaking" event where people get together to engage in new partnerships to advance the implementation of the United Nations development agenda. The Development Cooperation Forum multi-stakeholder dialogue will also provide an opportunity for

civil society and the private sector to engage in a discussion with both donors and recipients of development assistance about the future of development cooperation.

54. Interest of the private sector in the work of the United Nations has also continued to rise. The 2007 Global Compact Leaders Summit[9], which is to be held in Geneva in July and is expected to attract an unprecedented number of chief executive officers of companies, attests to this fact. The United Nations has responded to the increased interest of civil society and the private sector through innovative forms of engagement. One such new mechanism is the Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies and Development, approved by the Secretary-General on 28 March 2006, which promotes the mainstreaming of information and communication technologies for development in the United Nations development agenda, including by enhancing multi-stakeholder involvement in the World Summit on the Information Society follow-up through the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Economic and Social Council. A synopsis of the activities of the Global Alliance is contained in the annex to the present report.

[9] See http://www.globalcompactsummit.org/.

Annex

Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies and Development

1. The Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies and Development[a] was created by the Secretary-General on 28 March 2006 and launched in Kuala Lumpur in June 2006.

2. The Global Alliance provides an inclusive, multi-stakeholder global forum and platform for cross-sectoral policy dialogue and advocacy, and catalyses multi-stakeholder, action-oriented partnerships under it umbrella. Largely a network of networks, that Alliance does not have any operational or implementing role.

3. In its first year, the Global Alliance has acquired strong brand recognition as an innovative and open United Nations initiative, bringing together all key stakeholders around a single networking platform in support of the internationally agreed development goals.

4. The Global Alliance is positioned to be a key contributor to the achievement of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, and is well placed to further the United Nations development agenda and to make a meaningful contribution to harnessing the technology-driven World Summit on the Information Society process, which supports the broader United Nations development goals.

5. The initial focus of the Global Alliance is on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in promoting: (a) education, (b) health, (c) entrepreneurship and (d) governance. Significant attention is being paid to the topics of connectivity and access, with special consideration given to Africa. The 2007 business plan of the Global Alliance provides strategic direction and a framework for its work.

6. The Global Alliance is chaired by Craig Barrett, Chairman of the Board of Intel Corporation, and guided by two multi-stakeholder bodies, the Steering Committee and the Strategy Council. The Panel of High-level Advisers and the Network of Champions provide a larger pool of policy and expert advice to the Global Alliance. To support the achievement of its objectives, the Global Alliance has formed complementary initiatives and networks to foster policy debate and partnerships for action.

7. The Better Connectivity with Broadband to Africa initiative supports African efforts to accelerate the roll-out of communication infrastructure and increase broadband access across the continent by indicating a clear policy approach to the development of backbone networks to encourage interest and investment in broadband infrastructure and services. A major regional conference will be organized in October 2007 in Kigali by the International Telecommunication Union, the World Bank, the African Union, the African Development Bank, the African Telecommunication Union, the Economic Commission for Africa and the Global Alliance to bring together African leaders and policymakers along with members of the domestic and international private sector, financial institutions and other donors to agree on a concrete and comprehensive programme for accelerating the roll-out

[a] www.un.gaid.org.

of broadband, as well as other complementary actions for rural connectivity, capacity-building and local applications.

8. Telecentre.org aims to scale up the successes of the telecentre movement by helping telecentres become stronger, more sustainable and more numerous. In March 2007, the telecentre.org umbrella included networks in at least 10 countries serving thousands of centres. The initiative also provides a platform for over 36 partners focused on telecentre networking, training, content and services. The core social investment partners — Microsoft, the International Development Research Centre and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation — have contributed 21 million Canadian dollars to support these activities. Under the umbrella of the Global Alliance, telecentre.org plans to grow significantly over the next two years through a new affiliate partnership programme.

9. The Cyber Development Corps is being developed under the leadership of the Malaysian Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation to promote capacity-building through South-South cooperation. This initiative will establish a global outreach programme based on the spirit of volunteerism to help less developed nations and communities benefit from global ICT infrastructure and resources, and enhance their national development plans.

10. The Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communications Technology was launched under the leadership of the Wireless Internet Institute and World Times, Inc. to promote ICT solutions for over 600 million people with disabilities worldwide, encourage best-policy practices among Governments in the context of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and accelerate the development by industry and civil society of the scientific, industrial, standardization and economic conditions to make such solutions affordable worldwide. The initiative will create, among other things, a web-based media resource centre; a digital inclusion index establishing metrics, benchmarks and rankings for countries; and a global award for inclusive technology.

11. The Free Access for Schools to the Internet initiative advocates efforts to secure free or affordable Internet access for schools. It is envisioned that Governments will implement policies and actions promoted by this initiative through creative multi-stakeholder partnerships, using innovative financial solutions to minimize or avoid the cost burden for schools. Additional cumulative effects are anticipated, such as the decline of overall connectivity costs through increased competition.

12. Seventeen thematic Communities of Expertise are web-based networks bringing together motivated and capable actors to address specific, well-defined problems related to information and communication technologies and development in a results-oriented manner and to identify and disseminate good practice.

13. The six regional networks of the Global Alliance (for Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Arab States and countries in transition), once fully operational, will ensure the open, inclusive, participatory and truly global character of the Alliance and the adequate reflection of regional perspectives and needs in its activities.

14. Stakeholder networks will maximize participation to reflect the viewpoints of constituents with shared interests, extend the outreach of the Global Alliance and promote channels for smooth communications and collaboration. Six

networks — among civil society, youth, gender, persons with disabilities, parliamentarians and local government and regional authorities — are at various stages of development.

15. The Global Alliance is also working actively to provide multi-stakeholder inputs to the intergovernmental follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society, in both the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Economic and Social Council.